

Mayfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116463
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	331557
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Harmes
Headteacher	Mr Derek Trimmer
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
School address	Mayfield Road North End Portsmouth PO2 0RH
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mayfield School is larger than most secondary schools. It has specialist status for the arts and has recently gained a Healthy School Award. Its students are mainly White British. A higher than average proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with the major area of need relating to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is part of a loose federation with other local schools to provide curriculum opportunities and develop common approaches to teaching. When the school was last inspected it was given a notice to improve as it was judged to be performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to. The school is part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' National Challenge initiative, as the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was below 30% in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mayfield is an improving school which now offers satisfactory education and care. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Teaching has improved. Students are being given more interesting things to do and are challenged at levels more appropriate to their abilities than before. Assessment information is also being used to better effect to monitor students' progress and to intervene when it is too slow. As a result, students' progress is now satisfactory, standards are closer to the national average when they leave, and the school is beginning to achieve more challenging goals. Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain in the quality of students' experiences in lessons, leading to variations in their progress over time. Teachers do not always clarify what it is that students should do to achieve high-quality work or give them sufficient opportunities to think independently about how to move their learning on. On some occasions, students' behaviour is not managed well enough.

The school has worked hard to improve the curriculum, which is now good. This is leading to greater enjoyment by students which is reflected in their higher attendance. The school's specialist status is more established and makes a good contribution to students' experiences. Improvements in students' achievement mean that targets associated with the school's specialist status are largely being exceeded.

The pastoral care and guidance for students continues to be an area of strength. Vulnerable students, including those with behavioural difficulties, are well supported, so that exclusions have fallen and their achievement has improved. Intervention to improve attendance is effective. The majority of students behave well, demonstrating growing pride in their school. However, a minority do not and sometimes become disruptive in lessons. Parents and carers are supportive of the school's work but some are concerned about the behaviour of this minority of students. Academic guidance is of better quality but variations in the usefulness of teachers' marking remain.

Leadership and management have improved and the pace of improvement demonstrates a good capacity for the school to move on. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and leaders are better focused on raising standards. Middle leaders are more effective in monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility. Good use is made of opportunities for leaders to develop their expertise through working with National Challenge and local authority staff. However, the strengths of the best practice in leadership are not consistent across the school, so that variations remain. For example, the impact made on students' achievement in different subjects and year groups is inconsistent. The school works well with its external partners, such as the federated schools, as reflected in its leading role in developing a Diploma in Creative and Media Studies. Good efforts are made to build relationships with parents and carers even where they are reluctant to get involved in their children's education. The school does much to develop community cohesion and most students contribute well to the school community and the local area. However, the promotion of community cohesion is not systematic enough, and is notably lacking in opportunities for students to prepare for life in the multicultural community in Great Britain.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the good practice in teaching and learning so that:
 - students always understand exactly what they need to do in lessons and their homework tasks in order to achieve as much as they can
 - students have more opportunities to work independently and take more responsibility for their learning
 - teachers set consistently high expectations for students' behaviour and manage it well.
- Systematically embed the rigour evident in the best leadership and management practices within the work of all leaders to ensure consistently good learning experiences for all students.
- Develop the school's promotion of community cohesion so that students are more fully prepared for life in multicultural British society.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standards reached by the end of Key Stage 3 have begun to rise in mathematics, English and science. The proportion of students reaching the expected levels remains below the national average; however, this represents satisfactory progress, given that most year groups join with below-average attainment overall. Fewer students than the national average exceed the levels expected for their age group, although more are beginning to do so. Accelerating progress made by older students has led to an increase in the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, to figures in line with the national average. The proportion gaining A* to C grades in mathematics and English has risen, although it remains below the national average. The progress made by students in different subjects and classes is becoming more consistent, but the variations remain too wide. Achievement is good in some subjects, especially those linked to the specialist arts status. The students achieve well overall on vocational courses such as information and communication technology (ICT) and construction. The progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved, especially those with more significant levels of need, and is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' social and moral development are satisfactory. Most enjoy school, have good relationships with each other and their teachers, and behave sensibly in lessons and around school. Nevertheless, some students have not reached the same maturity as their peers, as is reflected in pockets of poor behaviour in some lessons. Attendance levels remain below average, but are improving, and fewer students regularly miss school. Students show good awareness of the importance of healthy living and are actively involved with the canteen manager in devising healthy menus. They participate well in sporting activities. Their spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. The students have relatively few opportunities to experience the cultural diversity of contemporary British society directly. They make a good contribution to the school community, for example as prefects, 'buddies' for younger students, school council

representatives and on the governing body. They feel their views are increasingly taken into account on issues such as curricular changes and the appointment of new staff. The students contribute well to the local community through fund-raising and involvement with primary schools in sporting activities, dance and drama workshops. The school works hard to prepare students for adult life through its personal, social, health and citizenship programme, careers guidance and work experience. However, a significant number leave without good qualifications in mathematics and English.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Emerging strengths in teaching include better use of assessment information to plan lessons around students' differing needs and to set more challenging expectations. Lessons are more active, with pupils working in pairs or groups to complete hands-on tasks. This is helping to improve the rate at which they make progress and their attitudes to learning. Students appreciate these efforts to make learning more enjoyable. 'Teachers go the extra mile for you to help you to do better,' said a Year 10 student. Examples of outstanding teaching are increasingly evident, notably in the specialist arts areas. Better use of tracking data is helping teachers to identify when students are not making enough progress, and hence to trigger support. However, variations remain in the quality of teaching. For example, in some lessons teachers model clearly what students need to do to achieve well or progress to the next grade, but this is not consistent across the school. In addition, students are not always given enough opportunities to develop independent learning skills, for example by assessing and improving their own work. Questioning is not always sufficiently precise to challenge students to think hard. In many lessons, teachers engage students quickly and reinforce high expectations of behaviour, but others do not. As a consequence, in a minority of lessons the climate for learning rapidly deteriorates. Lengthier homework projects in Key Stage 3, introduced this year, are helping to raise standards. Nevertheless, there are significant variations in implementing this approach to independent learning and some students say they receive little homework.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum innovations at Key Stage 3 have begun to make a positive impact on standards. The cultural studies programme in Year 7 is helping students demonstrate more independent learning skills and better engagement in learning. A shortened Key Stage 3 curriculum for more able students is raising their aspirations by enabling them to access higher-level studies earlier. The increased achievement of older students' stems in part from their access to more appropriate provision. A wide range of GCSE and vocational pathways, including Diplomas and Young Apprenticeships, are available and high-attaining students can now study AS-level courses. New courses, in, for example, photography, have been introduced and resources, such as the modern dance studio, are motivating students to learn. A good range of opportunities for extended study support and intervention programmes are ensuring that students' needs are better met, notably in English and mathematics. Good use is made of ICT to accelerate learning across the curriculum and the standards reached in ICT by older students have risen significantly. The school's specialist arts college status has become a central plank of the curriculum, with increasing numbers of students studying art, drama and dance. Many students participate in extra-curricular and performing arts activities which are helping to develop their confidence

and self-esteem. The range of extra-curricular activities is good, with opportunities in many subject areas, including sport. The curriculum is enriched well by visits and 'flexible days', when learning takes place in different curriculum areas linked by a theme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students confirm that adults support their personal and emotional needs well. School is a safe place to be and, although some bullying occurs, students say it is dealt with promptly when made known to staff. Safeguarding procedures are secure, with close attention to health and safety matters. Vulnerable and looked-after students are carefully monitored and guided. Good use of external agencies, some situated on site, gives students personalised support. The Inclusion Base and Isolation Unit effectively supports students with behavioural and emotional problems and those at risk of exclusion, so that fewer are being excluded. Additional adults, such as teaching assistants, make a good contribution to vulnerable students in withdrawal sessions. However, they are not always deployed effectively during lessons. Attendance is below average but is improving, due to the impact of robust monitoring systems and procedures. Good induction procedures smooth the way for students joining Year 7. Students are given clear advice when making options and careers choices. The school makes good use of connections with local industry to help students make informed decisions about their future options. As a result, the number of students leaving without going on to employment or further education has been significantly reduced. Academic guidance has improved but remains inconsistent. Students are mostly informed of their target grades and levels and the progress they are making towards meeting them. Marking has improved but does not always clarify what students should do to reach their targets or challenge students to think for themselves about how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The ambition of senior leaders to raise standards has borne fruit because they have shared the responsibility for improving achievement more effectively with their colleagues at all levels. As a consequence, teamwork is now much stronger. A good range of professional development, involving external consultants and opportunities for less experienced staff to work with more experienced colleagues, has improved the capacity of the school to move itself forward. Most middle leaders, including the newly created posts of Standards Manager and Progress Leader, are now much more skilful at monitoring their areas of responsibility. Sharper use of assessment data and tighter monitoring of lessons mean they are much clearer about the areas of provision that need improvement. Actions to tackle any weaknesses are increasingly robust because staff are being held accountable for their impact on students' personal and academic progress. Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain in the quality of students' academic and personal development. Governors provide a satisfactory level of monitoring and challenge and are increasingly focused on checking that the ground gained by the school is not lost.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Mayfield School, Portsmouth, PO2 0RH

This letter is to thank many of you who talked to me during the school's recent inspection and to tell you what we found. You may remember that the school was inspected a year ago and found to require significant improvement. The inspectors who visited at that time judged that the staff would be able to bring about the improvements needed. This inspection confirmed that this has happened and the formal notice to improve has been lifted. These are our main findings.

- The progress you make in lessons has improved and the standards reached, for example by Year 11 students in examinations, are rising.
- Lessons are of better quality. Many of you told us that you have seen an improvement over the year and that lessons are now more interesting.
- Many of you told us you enjoy school but that the behaviour of some students is poor and some teachers are not always able to manage behaviour well.
- You make a good contribution to the school and the community it serves. Many of you are keen to take on roles, such as prefects and school councillors, and to get involved in activities in the community.
- Attendance is still below the national average but is improving.
- The school takes good care of you and you feel confident in turning to adults if you have any concerns.
- The curriculum has improved and there is a better range of subjects to study. This is encouraging some older students to attend more regularly.
- Specialist status for the arts is giving you good opportunities in areas such as dance and drama and is also helping to raise standards in the school as a whole.
- The headteacher and the rest of the staff are working well together to improve the school and they are keen to build on the progress so far.

We have asked the headteacher to include the following in the plans for further development.

- Improve your achievement further by ensuring that adults help you understand exactly what you need to do to improve your work and that you are challenged to think for yourself how this might be achieved.
- Ensure that teachers set consistently high expectations for behaviour and manage it well.
- Make sure that teachers who lead different areas of the school's work are all equally effective in making improvements and checking the difference made to your learning.
- Give you more experience of the range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds found in the population of our country today, so you are ready to make the most of your opportunities and contribute positively when you leave school.

I wish you and your school the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector