

# Portchester School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113869
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bournemouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	338258
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carmen Rodney HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	865
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Keith Mitchell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Bradey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 43 lessons and two training sessions during a regional conference on leadership skills in the specialist status held by the school. Meetings were held with the chair of governors, staff and groups of students. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including governors' minutes and policies such as community cohesion, safeguarding and equal opportunities. In addition, the impact of various initiatives such as 'The Extra Mile' for secondary schools and the mentoring programme were scrutinised. Altogether 144 parental questionnaires were considered. The views of 40 staff and 86 students who completed separate questionnaires were also taken into consideration.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- trend of improvement in outcomes since the last inspection and in particular, the attainment of students in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4
- achievement of gifted and talented students, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small minority of students from minority ethnic groups to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- how well balanced is the curriculum and the specialist subjects in meeting the needs of all students
- the role and vision of leaders and managers, including governors, in driving improvement
- how well equal opportunities and community cohesion are developed.

## Information about the school

Portchester is an average-sized secondary modern school for boys, which draws students from some of the most challenging areas in the borough. The majority of students are of White British heritage, with 14% from minority ethnic groups. A small minority of these students are at the early stage of learning English as a second language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is low. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average.

The school has had specialist sports status since 2004. It has also received a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Sportsmark, Youth Sport Trust Innovation Award and Investors in People.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

Portchester School has been on a long journey since its last two inspections. As a result of leaders and governors working together to develop a shared corporate strategic vision to improve outcomes, it is providing a satisfactory education, with much that is good. The clarity of direction has led to significant improvements in results year-on-year since its last inspection in 2007.

Since that time, the school has made good progress in tackling the areas for development. Attainment, learning and progress are improving strongly; the gap between the school's results and the national figures has narrowed significantly, particularly in English. Although mathematics still lags behind, senior leaders have not flinched from taking actions to improve outcomes in the subject. A well-structured raising achievement plan is used very well to drive improvement, which has been sustained over the last three years. These factors, combined with robust self-evaluation and a clearly defined vision, demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further. Improvement to date is the result of good leadership and strong teamwork. The openness and conviction of the senior leaders to deliver tough messages is ensuring that students can achieve better outcomes against all odds. Consequently, the senior leaders and governors hold staff to account through challenging practice and underperformance and taking rigorous actions when the principles of good quality learning are compromised. They recognise the skills within the workforce and have developed key roles to maximise the provision and contributions from all staff, particularly the lead learners and middle managers. Shared leadership is effective and increasingly used to inspire and motivate staff to push students to aim for better outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4. For example, the school's good assessment system is reviewed and adjusted regularly to set challenging targets. As a result, there is an exciting team spirit that fosters a 'can do' culture which pervades the school as staff believe that the provision can make a difference to students' lives.

The corporate effort to sustain improvement through tailoring provision to students' needs is a key feature of the school. The result is that teaching, although satisfactory, has much that is good and students are motivated and keen to learn. While teaching has improved, all teachers do not routinely use the good tracking systems to plan and match work to the needs of all students. Additionally, independent learning is not well developed and the best practice, some of which is outstanding, is not shared widely to ensure consistently good or better teaching and learning.

The specialist status in sport is a distinctive feature of the school. As a centre of sporting excellence, students achieve well in the specialism. The specialist status makes an

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outstanding contribution to enhancing the curriculum and extends to working with a wide range of partners.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that attainment is at least average in all key subjects, particularly in mathematics, by consolidating the changes made so that more students attain the increasingly challenging high GCSE grades.
- Bring about more consistency in teaching by increasing the proportion of good or better lessons through:
  - consistently sharing good practice across all subjects
  - using assessment information to match teaching to individuals' learning needs
  - giving students more opportunities to take responsibility for their learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average but students' academic learning and progress are good in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Differences in rates of progress between students, including the few from minority ethnic groups, are slight. The increasing numbers of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those learning English as a second language and looked-after children generally make better progress than their peers nationally because very good systems are used to identify and support their needs. However, some of the more able students are not making such rapid progress. The school has responded to their needs by developing a gifted and talented programme, but it is too early to measure its impact.

Over the last three years, progress has been sustained and students' rate of progress is almost twice the national average, enabling them to attain challenging targets in the GCSE examinations. For example, in 2009, the school attained its best results with 60% of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades and 36% reaching similar grades when English and mathematics are included, which is above the minimum target expected for secondary schools. The attainment gap is narrowing but remains significantly below the national average, particularly in mathematics. Improved provision, such as the new subject leaders and staff and innovative teaching approaches, has resulted in students making better progress over the last two years. Nevertheless, the school recognises that the changes made need further consolidation. The drive for improvement means that better results are secured each year through the effective targeting of students and accurate monitoring by leaders and managers.

The majority of students are thoughtful and relationships throughout the school are based on trust and respect. Students say that they feel safe in and around the school, but occasionally, incidents outside of school and the behaviour of a very small minority of boys, referred to as 'naughty' by their peers, mar relationships and affect students' perception of behaviour around school. Very good support systems are in place to deal with issues around safeguarding students. For example, well-trained peer mediators

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adopt a mature and sensitive approach when using restorative justice techniques to deal with boys who do not observe the code of conduct.

Students have strong moral, social and spiritual values, evident in the respect shown for other cultures and religions. As a result, fair play dominates the way in which students treat each other and, without exception, boys engage well with new arrivals from Europe and other minority ethnic groups. Students pursue all aspects of healthy lifestyle with rigour because of the specialist sports activities and excellent and nutritious meals, which attract a very high take-up by boys and provision on a daily basis for Malmesbury Park Junior School. All students appreciate the varied menus. Attendance is improving but there are a few persistent absentees who stubbornly resist the stringent actions taken by the school.

Students enthusiastically take part in a very wide range of house and team events. The school's specialist status is used very well to develop leadership skills and additional qualifications. Students' good contribution to school and community events was clearly evident during the inspection when excellent ambassadorial skills were seen as they worked with their teachers to host the regional specialist status conference on leadership skills in preparation for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

The reliable monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, their increasingly positive attitudes to achieving well and the good levels of support contribute strongly to students making better progress each year. Although there is a bulk of good teaching and some is outstanding, overall, the quality is satisfactory rather than good because inconsistencies remain. Consequently, this affects students' attainment in various subjects. A number of features support the effectiveness of good or better teaching and learning. For example, students' positive attitudes and willingness to take part in regular feedback and discussion enable teachers to skilfully probe, assess and consolidate their learning. Well-structured plans with short tasks, including practical activities, build on students' prior learning. Planning makes good use of assessment to match work to students' learning needs; there is support for students learning English and lessons are well balanced. However, in other lessons, progress remains satisfactory because objectives describe tasks rather than the skills to be developed. Furthermore, teachers talk for too long and this stifles the use of discussion to explore learning and develop students' communication skills. In a few lessons, students who lacked confidence struggled to do the work and did not receive sufficient help or modelling to show how they needed to complete their work to make at least satisfactory progress.

Teachers have a good overview of the rate of students' progress based on the good systems of tracking and analysing assessment information. In turn, students are setting themselves aspirational grades and speak confidently about achieving their targets. However, not all teachers make good use of this assessment information to match work to the needs of all students.

Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been reviewed to provide greater depth and breadth and is now well matched to the needs and aspirations of individuals and different groups of students. At Key Stage 3, nurture groups and the '10th Day' timetable for Year 7 students ensure that suitable systems and courses are fully in place to support them. Older students at risk of becoming disengaged remain in education because of the availability of a range of work-related courses. Similarly, good opportunities are available for gifted and talented students to study three sciences. Enrichment activities are firmly established as a strength of the school, along with good study support opportunities, life skills courses and provision for students to learn about different cultures in and beyond Britain.

Good quality care, which has some outstanding features, permeates all aspects of the school's provision and begins before students transfer to Year 7. Positive relations with support agencies, pre-emptive work with primary schools and good transition arrangements contribute to reducing worklessness. Advice, support and guidance are of good quality. The range of services available to support students forms the hub of the school and effectively helps students to make decisions about their future. For example, the school has been highly effective in reducing the proportion of students not in employment, education or training. This is significantly lower than the average for the region.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school is effectively led and managed. The headteacher, with the able support of the assistant headteachers and middle managers, has a good understanding of the school's work. There is a clear focus on making a difference to students' lives through improving provision, in particular teaching and learning. An inclusive ethos for learning is well established and the past history of the school and barriers to learning, such as low aspirations, are not allowed to interfere with ensuring students achieve well. Senior staff have kept up the momentum of improvement through robust monitoring, distributing leadership roles and ensuring that staff take more ownership for students' progress, including discipline, in lessons. To move the school forward, senior leaders have acted decisively when provision has been compromised to ensure that there are no excuses. The majority of staff have bought into the vision for improvement and recognise that, as a whole, they work as a 'cohesive unit' and 'the school has made significant progress since the last two inspections'.

One of the school's main strengths lies in the careful monitoring and evaluation of provision. This has helped senior and middle leaders to know where the strengths and areas for improvement are and how to put into place suitable actions to tackle underlying weaknesses. The raising achievement plan exemplifies good practice in raising attainment. Success criteria are clear and planning for improvement ensures that data are well managed and analysed to ensure all students have equal opportunities to achieve. For example, more able students have been identified as a target group that has hitherto not been well served.

Governors are very well informed and provide outstanding support and challenge for the school. They fulfil their statutory duties well, and are tenacious in challenging the school about its effectiveness and seeking the views of students and parents and acting on concerns. Safeguarding issues, including risk assessments, are secure and critical incidents are dealt with effectively. The school does much to promote community cohesion, both within this country and in the international community, but its action plan, policy statement and audit on this area of its work are currently being reviewed. Extensive partnership with external agencies and the work with parents to gain their trust underpin the school's work to improve outcomes for all students. For example, the collaborative work with Bournemouth and Poole College on the 'Extra Mile' project has been used effectively to raise the aspirations of targeted students. The volume of



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personal letters and tributes testify to the confidence in the partnership work that exists between the home and school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers of approximately one sixth of students completed and returned the Ofsted questionnaire. The majority are positive about all aspects of the school's work. Nevertheless, a small minority expressed concerns about unacceptable behaviour; the progress of their children; the quality of support available for them and the help given to them to support their children's learning. The inspection team found that while the behaviour of a very small minority of students sometimes affects learning because teaching strategies are not always effective or consistent, there was no evidence to support the personal and negative experiences of a few students to indicate that misbehaviour is widespread and students are unsafe in the school.

The evidence base showed that a significant number of students face challenging circumstances, often beyond the school's remit. Despite these situations, inspectors found that the school is highly effective in championing the cause of students and deals with all critical incidents effectively and efficiently. The inspection team also found that the school works very well with parents and external agencies to support their children to enable them to make good progress.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Portchester School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 144 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 865 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	25	87	67	7	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	31	24	91	70	5	4	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	36	78	60	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	30	77	59	12	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	30	75	58	10	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	23	83	64	13	10	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	23	88	68	11	8	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	23	79	61	6	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	28	81	62	10	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	24	67	52	22	17	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	25	74	57	9	7	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	36	28	78	60	8	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	39	69	53	6	5	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



14 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Portchester School, Bournemouth BH7 6NZ

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We appreciated your helpful approach and willingness to talk to us. We were very impressed with the conduct of students who represented the school during the sports leadership meeting on the last day of the inspection.

In Ofsted, inspectors talk about 'upward trajectory or trend' when examination results are improving. I want to use this phrase to describe how much your school has improved its reputation and examination results since it was inspected in 2006 and 2007. Portchester is providing you with a satisfactory education and there are many good features about the quality of the provision. Everything about Portchester has improved because the leadership team and governors have worked very hard to make sure that no barrier in your personal life, community or the school will stop you from achieving well. The headteacher is effectively supported by staff who are working hard to ensure that you do well. As a result, the GCSE examinations results have improved every year since 2007.

Some areas of the school's work are indeed good and these include the curriculum and the specialist sports status. So many of you demonstrate prowess in sporting activities such as rowing; there are aspiring footballers and potential 2012 participants in the Olympics. In addition, you receive good care, guidance and support. We agree wholeheartedly with your parents that enrichment activities and the 'culture and ethos of care' contribute to motivating and encouraging you to achieve well ' all of these characteristics are key themes of the school's aims. The school ensures that most aspects of your well-being are good. Behaviour is good around the school and we were impressed with your conduct and use of space around the building. A few boys misbehave and this occasionally spoils the ethos and can also affect what parents, some staff and their peers think about the school's image, and for this reason, behaviour is satisfactory rather than good.

In the quest to become even better, we left the school with two main areas for improvement: first, to raise attainment further in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and second, to ensure that teaching is always good or better. You can play

a big part in this quest by attending regularly and meeting your aspirational targets.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney

Her Majesty's Inspector

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