

Philip Morant School and College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115320
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338564
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1650
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lorna Kean
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Cowans
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed the school's work and looked at: pupil progress data; a range of policies and minutes of meetings; school self-evaluation documents; risk assessments; financial information; and the single central record of safeguarding checks on staff. The inspection team analysed questionnaires that were returned by 525 parents and carers, 125 students and 79 members of staff.

Between them, inspectors were in the school for 92 hours. About half of this was outside lesson time. Inspectors devoted a total of 22 hours to observing 45 lessons involving 43 of the 101 teachers in the school. They therefore spent approximately half of the available lesson time, or a quarter of the total time, in observing teaching and learning. Approximately 30% of their time was spent in meetings with staff, governors and pupils. The remaining time was spent in reading documents, analysing data, recording evidence and agreeing their judgements.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:
- the school's view that learning and progress are good throughout the school, given the GCSE results for girls in 2009, and that sixth form attainment is above average
- the school's view that a high proportion of teaching is good or better.
- the school's view that care, guidance and support are good, which is not entirely consistent with its view of students' personal development.

Information about the school

Philip Morant School and College is an over-subscribed school that draws pupils from a wide area of Colchester. It has specialist status for technology, which includes science and mathematics. A proportion of students are admitted on the basis of a technological aptitude test. Most students are of White British origin with very few students at an early stage of learning English. The proportion entitled to free school meals is well below average. The school has an attached resource base for 12 students with hearing impairment. Even so, the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school holds the Sports Mark, IT Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

Philip Morant School and College is the only comprehensive school in Colchester to have a sixth form. The strong competition from the local grammar schools and sixth form college means that some of the school's most able students leave after Year 11 to join these other institutions. The sixth form has an inclusive entry policy and some students are relatively new to this country. Thus, the average prior attainment in the sixth form does not fully reflect the high levels of attainment in the main school.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Philip Morant School and College has improved in a number of ways since its last inspection. The school's specialist status in technology and its involvement in partnerships with other local providers have helped to enhance the curriculum, which now meets most students' needs well. Lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and other subjects contribute to students' very good personal development. The outstanding provision of care, guidance and support means that each student is treated as an individual, despite the school's growing size. The well-targeted academic support systems help students to attain consistently high standards in GCSE and equivalent examinations. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are monitored with particular care. The school promotes equal opportunities well: the progress of students with hearing impairment is good and their social integration is outstanding, with all students having the opportunity to learn British Sign Language. The school's work with the deaf community is one of the highlights of its promotion of community cohesion.

Students' achievement is good because the high attainment at GCSE and good learning and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 are balanced by the satisfactory outcomes in the sixth form. Attainment in GCE examinations fluctuates from below average to average in line with variations in the prior attainment of the different cohorts.

Attendance is above average and the vast majority of students enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns. They value the system of 'bullying mentors' and appreciate the support they receive from adults. Students get along well with each other and racism is rare. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually good, and most students want to learn. The best lessons help students to develop independent learning skills, but others restrict them to a more passive role.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. The school council contributes to decision making, including senior appointments as well as day-to-day matters such as changes to the uniform, school dinners and the timing of the school day. Other students act as bullying mentors, junior sports leaders, house mentors for careers education and junior health trainers. Students are active in sports and many cycle to school. Many choose the 'healthy meal deal', which the school has ensured is affordable to those on the free school meal allowance.

Students also make outstanding progress in developing skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. For example, in the work related learning days that are held each year they learn to work in teams and apply their literacy and numeracy skills to solve problems. The school reports encouraging feedback from employers who host

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students on work experience.

The headteacher promotes a clear vision for the school as one that provides compelling experiences for its students which enrich their lives and help each of them to reach their potential. Effective monitoring and comprehensive self-evaluation mean that, in most respects, senior managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and its place in the local community. The school's improvement plan is based on this intelligence and the leadership team is ambitious to make the school outstanding in every respect. The improvements made to the curriculum and to care, guidance and support since the last inspection have led to better outcomes for students. They illustrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Nevertheless, the inspection identified some less well developed aspects of the school's work. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory because work is not matched consistently well to the needs of all groups. Judgements of teaching quality by school leaders are sometimes over-generous. Their monitoring of teaching identifies some strengths and weaknesses, but it is not always translated into clear guidance to improve satisfactory teaching. The leadership of teaching is therefore satisfactory, despite the good overall drive for school improvement.

Lesson plans have clear learning objectives and include a profile of students' prior attainment, but it is not always clear how the previous learning is taken into account. Where other adults are supporting a lesson, the planning does not always indicate how they will be deployed to support learning. Inspectors saw a range of teaching approaches being used, including strategies for assessing students during the lesson. However, the effectiveness of these approaches and strategies was variable, even among lessons in the same subject. Variations in teachers' application of their subject expertise were particularly apparent in their use of assessment information gained during the lesson to adapt their teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership of teaching and learning by ensuring that, within a year:
 - lesson observation judgements take rigorous account of the progress made by different groups and the quality of assessment
 - teachers are provided with personalised support, guidance and development opportunities to help them make best use of their subject expertise.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the use of formative assessment raising it to the standard of the best teachers by ensuring that:
 - for each area of the curriculum, there is a clear and collective understanding among all teachers and other adults who support learning of how to secure high quality learning outcomes
 - lesson planning is explicit about the contribution of adults who provide support in lessons, including what they should do during teacher-led whole class phases of the lesson.

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- Over the next three years, improve and sustain students' progress in the sixth form and reduce the variations in results between successive sixth form cohorts.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The judgement that students are making good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 was finely balanced. On one hand, the school maintains a very strong record of consistently high results in GCSE and equivalent qualifications, even though students' attainment on entry is only a little above average. Results are strong in English, and in the specialist areas of technology, mathematics and science. The progress of students with special educational needs and /or disabilities is securely good. On the other hand, comparative data suggests that students' progress in 2009 was less than that of similar students in other schools, particularly for girls whose attainment had been average when they joined the school. Also, learning and progress were satisfactory in the majority of lessons seen during the inspection. In several cases, this was due to progress being inconsistent between different groups of students: good for the majority but only satisfactory for some groups.

However, there are no systematic differences in progress among students from different ethnic groups or between those entitled to free school meals and others. The school's own observations, which are spread over a longer period of time, suggest that any underperformance by a group in one lesson is likely to be made up later. The school recognises that girls underperformed in 2009, but has evidence that this issue does not affect other year groups. Student questionnaire responses show that the great majority of students enjoy school. Therefore, on balance, inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that students' achievement and enjoyment of learning are good.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed through work in citizenship, PSHE, drama, and religious education. Extra-curricular activities such as foreign travel, musical productions and performances enhance students' cultural and social experiences well. Students feel a very strong sense of community. They are proactive in thinking how to support others. For example, after the recent earthquake in Haiti, students immediately proposed a way of raising funds for disaster relief. Students involved in designing a 'green car' were awarded the Manning Press Award for community involvement, illustrating the school's commitment to sustainable development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ 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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The best lessons seen during the inspection maintained a good pace of learning through tasks with different levels of challenge according to students' assessed needs. Questions were used well to probe students' understanding. Teachers then adapted the lesson to make sure that key learning points were securely consolidated. More commonly, teachers checked on students' work, but were not so alert to the difficulties that some were experiencing. As a result, students' learning needs were not so well met and a significant minority made satisfactory rather than good progress.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Provision for students joining Year 7 is planned in partnership with primary schools. The impressive Year 7 key skills programme helps students to hone their literacy skills of comprehension, reading, speaking and listening. Students receive very good support and guidance in Years 9 and 11 to choose their future learning pathways. The school's specialism is reflected well in the participation of all students in technology and the availability of GCSE statistics and separate sciences. A few students receive appropriate alternative provision for part of the week. Vocational options are well established and the school is a lead partner for diploma courses in hospitality and engineering. In contrast, participation and success rates in modern foreign languages are below average.

The curriculum contributes well to students' personal development outcomes. Art and music lessons expose students to a range of cultures. Lessons in science and food technology encourage them to lead healthy lifestyles and students have at least two hours of physical exercise each week. There is a full programme of work-related learning, including 'Enterprise Days' and work experience for all.

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The heads of house and form tutors know students very well. Students with special educational needs receive well targeted support. Students who are underachieving or experiencing personal problems are quickly identified. They receive effective academic and pastoral support because the school's excellent monitoring system includes information on both learning and personal development. The school works well with care agencies through its regular multi-agency meetings and shows persistence to make sure that all partners play their part in supporting vulnerable students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders and governors are ambitious to improve the school further and have the capacity to do so. They have set out their main priorities in the school improvement plan, which reflects their shared vision for the school. They have established a very good process to review progress on planned improvements, supported by the school's well designed management information system. They have established a good range of partnerships to enhance the curriculum and to promote students well-being. The governing body has ensured that the school meets its statutory requirements and secures good value for money. The school validates its self-evaluation by seeking independent views from its school improvement partner and the local authority.

Arrangements for safeguarding are good and this aspect is very well led. Staff demonstrate comprehensive awareness of their role in child protection because they receive high quality training with regular updates. All relevant policies and risk assessments are in place. The school follows safe recruitment procedures and is keen to identify further improvements it can make to safeguarding. Governors understand their role in safeguarding and there are designated governors for special educational needs, child protection and looked after children.

The school's promotion of equal opportunities and community cohesion is based on a thorough understanding of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. Parents and other stakeholders have been consulted in devising plans. For example, the school provides parenting classes and signing lessons. Adults work hard with students to develop and maintain the school's strong community ethos and to tackle discrimination. Students learn about living, learning and working in a multi-cultural society. The school is keen to strengthen the global aspects of community cohesion, though there already some good examples.

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Most parents and carers attend regular events to discuss their children's progress. There are alternative strategies to engage those who do not attend. The good range of communication routes includes newsletters, focus groups, 'Parentmail' and the school's website, which hosts a procedure for complaints.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Students achieve satisfactorily in the sixth form and their personal development is very good. There are annual fluctuations in the number of students recruited to the sixth form with their prior attainment usually being average or below average. Students made good progress last year in A level sports studies and in AS level health and social care, psychology, chemistry and law. However, progress in most subjects is satisfactory so attainment reflects the prior attainment.

Leadership and management of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form leads a strong team of tutors. The capacity for improvement is evident in the response to below average AS results in 2008. Improvements were made to the curriculum and to the guidance for students. As a result, the curriculum meets students' needs well and students receive a high standard of care and guidance. With students enrolled on more appropriate courses, results improved in 2009.

The quality of teaching and assessment in the sixth form is satisfactory, the reasons being similar to those in the main school. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, but students do not always receive good guidance on how to improve their work. As a result, they make satisfactory progress in most lessons.

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During the last two years, the school has made improvements to its facilities for sixth form study. The sixth form now has its own library and specialised teaching facilities. Senior leaders believe that it is now poised to enhance its provision, helping it to retain more of its highest achieving students from Year 11, thereby stabilising attainment.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Over 500 parents and carers returned questionnaires, a larger than average response rate for a secondary school. Of those that responded, 93% said that they were happy with their child's experience at the school. A small minority of parents and carers and a few staff raised concerns about the management of behaviour in lessons. However, behaviour was good or better in most of the observed lessons and inadequate in only one. A few parents and carers felt the school could do more to help them to support their children's learning, but the inspection judged the school's engagement with parents and carers to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Philip Morant School and College 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 525 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1650 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	172	33	330	63	16	3	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	183	35	317	60	13	2	3	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	187	36	301	57	29	6	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	164	31	306	58	39	7	7	1
The teaching is good at this school	140	27	340	65	23	4	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	115	22	324	62	60	11	8	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	112	21	347	66	41	8	7	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)	139	26	315	60	28	5	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	155	30	310	59	32	6	7	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	130	25	283	54	65	12	12	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	116	22	299	57	37	7	10	2
The school is led and managed effectively	175	33	311	59	13	2	6	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	205	39	282	54	21	4	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



5 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Philip Morant School and College, Colchester, CO3 4QS

I am writing to you to tell you about your school's recent inspection. I would like to thank you on behalf of the team for the help you gave us during the inspection. We talked to several groups of you. We also surveyed 125 students. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe. Although a few of you say that behaviour is not well managed, the inspection judged behaviour to be good.

Philip Morant School and College is a good school which provides outstanding care, guidance and support. It has a satisfactory sixth form. It is well led and has improved in several respects since it was last inspected. The headteacher explained to us her vision of Philip Morant as a community school, providing you with rich experiences that will help you all to reach your potential.

You make good progress between Years 7 and 11. As a result, the school's GCSE results are consistently high. What is even more impressive is your personal development. We agree with the school's view that you adopt very healthy lifestyles and make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community. We were particularly impressed with the way that students with hearing impairment are integrated into the school. You receive an excellent preparation for the adult world.

There were a few areas where inspectors judged the school as satisfactory, rather than good. These are reflected in our recommendations for improving the school further, which are to:

- help all teachers to teach as well as possible and to be alert when you do not understand something, so they can help you as soon as possible
- make sure that lesson planning makes clear what any supporting adults should do when the teacher is talking to you as a group
- improve and sustain students' progress in the sixth form so results are more consistent.

Thank you again. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector

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