

The Mountbatten School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116408
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338811
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Bainbridge
Headteacher	Heather McIlroy
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
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Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited over 50 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including 842 parental questionnaires.

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

- how much progress students make (particularly those with special educational needs)
- how well the school uses information about students' achievement to help them to improve their work and achieve more
- the impact of middle leaders
- the impact of the school's specialist and international work.

Information about the school

Mountbatten is a large, heavily oversubscribed comprehensive school. It has specialist status for languages and sport, and holds the International Schools Award. The current headteacher has been in post for two years.

Students come from the town of Romsey and its surrounding area, and from the city of Southampton. The large majority are White British and few speak English as an additional language. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

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

Students at Mountbatten are immensely proud of their school. They have an impressive confidence and maturity, and very positive attitudes to school. They achieve highly, gaining excellent examination results at the end of Year 11. The school cares for and supports its students superbly, helping them to develop very well as young people. Perhaps most notably, students make an impressive contribution to the school and wider community. The opportunities to do this are wide and diverse and do not just involve a small select group, as impressive numbers of students are involved.

When Mountbatten was inspected three years ago, it was judged to be good overall, with a number of outstanding features. The school has sustained and built on this success, and many things have improved in the last three years. The Key Stage 4 curriculum, for example, has developed rapidly and students now have access to a much wider range of courses. Students' academic achievement is also tracked and monitored much more closely, helping leaders to ensure that everyone is on course to meet their targets.

This success is the result of highly effective leadership. Senior leaders provide a strong lead and a clear direction for the school. A sharp focus on developing the work of middle leaders has increased the consistency of leadership at this level, strengthening the school's capacity for further improvement. Self-evaluation is well developed and thorough; senior and middle leaders have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Leaders monitor all aspects of the school's work assiduously and there is an extensive programme of lesson observation. However, these observations sometimes focus too much on what the teacher is doing rather than how much students are actually learning.

The most important reason why Mountbatten is a good rather than an outstanding school is the quality of teaching. The very large majority of lessons are good and some are outstanding. Teaching across the school has many important strengths, including excellent classroom relationships and rigorous teaching of key subject knowledge. However, the overall quality of teaching is variable and, as a result, students make good rather than outstanding progress. In particular, lessons sometimes lack variety and have limited opportunities for students to work more independently, and teachers often miss opportunities to check students' learning as the lesson progresses. The development of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 has also been rather slow. The school has not yet made full use of the opportunities provided by the new national curriculum and there is variability in the way in which departments have implemented the subject orders. Opportunities for students to develop and consolidate literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum are also

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rather limited.

The school's work as a specialist college plays a significant part in its success. Both physical education and languages are highly successful areas of the school's work. They help the school to make strong local and international links.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - lessons provide greater opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively
 - the objectives of the lesson are clear to students and are used to check understanding and learning as the lesson progresses
 - greater use is made of information about students' targets and current achievement when teachers plan their lessons, so that work matches the needs of individual students more closely
 - teachers use focused questions systematically to assess and develop students' understanding
 - lesson monitoring focuses more sharply on assessing the impact of teaching on students' learning.
- Review and develop the curriculum at Key Stage 3 to ensure that it:
 - makes full use of the opportunities offered by the new National Curriculum
 - provides wider support to the development of students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students achieve very well. Examination results are consistently high and the proportion of students gaining five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics increased significantly in 2009. Achievement in English has fallen in the last few years, particularly in 2008. Leaders have acted robustly to deal with this issue. Examination results in English increased significantly last year and inspectors found that students are now progressing well in English lessons. Students achieve well in the specialist subjects of languages and physical education. They are highly motivated and enjoy learning. Attendance levels are well above both local and national averages.

Students' wider learning skills are very well developed. For example, they have excellent speaking and listening skills, and they are conscientious and diligent. Where lessons allow, students are able to concentrate and focus on activities for long periods of time. Where teaching is less varied and active, students can be rather passive, although this rarely leads to misbehaviour.

The school prepares students exceptionally well for the future. Very large numbers go on to further study and the number of leavers not in education, employment or training is tiny. Students behave very well in lessons and around the school; they are courteous,

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mature and friendly. Exclusions are rare. Students feel very safe in school. They say that incidents of bullying are rare. The school meets the diverse needs of different students well: students from all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, all do well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Systems to care for, support and provide guidance to students are excellent. Attendance, for example, is monitored very closely and the school works intensively with families when absence becomes a problem. A particular strength is the way in which the school prepares students for times of transition, for example between key stages and when they leave the school.

While the overall quality of teaching is good, in a significant proportion of lessons:

- students spend a lot of time listening to the teacher talk
- the objectives of the lesson are not framed in a way that enables students to understand what they need to learn and achieve during the lesson and are not used by the teacher to check students' learning as the lesson progresses

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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- teachers do not focus their questions sharply enough to assess and develop students' understanding systematically
- lesson activities are not varied enough to meet the needs of students of different abilities sufficiently closely.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum has developed rapidly and students now have the opportunity to study a very wide range of academic, vocational and applied courses. This enables students to select a combination of courses that meets their needs very well. Curriculum enrichment opportunities are excellent. Students are provided with an exceptionally broad range of extra-curricular opportunities and large numbers of students participate. The specialist subjects play a significant contribution here: there are, for example, a large number of sporting opportunities and trips overseas.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 school is very well led. The headteacher provides clear ambition and direction for the school; she has achieved much in the last two years. The quality of leadership across the school is now consistently high. Governors are extremely effective; they have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and provide sharp and incisive challenge to senior leaders. The morale of staff is high. Staff responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive. For example, over three quarters of respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'I am proud to be a member of staff at this school'; no-one disagreed.

The school does much to promote community cohesion. For example, it works in close partnership with a number of schools and providers in the local area, and has extensive international links, providing students with many opportunities to widen their understanding of life in other countries. However, links within the United Kingdom that would enable students to gain a better understanding of life in more ethnically diverse communities are less well developed.

Inspectors verified that the school meets all government requirements for safeguarding and that robust systems and processes are in place. The school is highly effective in meeting its duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination. Consequently, outcomes are consistently strong for all groups of students and incidents of racism are rare.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

An unusually large proportion of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire. The very large majority of responses were positive. About a quarter of parents included written comments. While about half of these included some negative comments, most criticisms were very minor and were often accompanied by a very positive profile of ticks. Positive comments covered a wide range of areas. A large proportion of comments (both positive and negative) related to the quality of teaching and learning. These echoed the findings of the inspection, which found much good and outstanding teaching and learning, but also some inconsistency in the overall quality of lessons.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Mountbatten 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 842 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1417 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	295	35	479	57	56	7	8	1
The school keeps my child safe	294	35	515	61	18	2	6	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	253	30	481	57	65	8	13	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	255	30	477	57	60	7	14	2
The teaching is good at this school	231	27	523	62	42	5	6	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	170	20	488	58	117	14	12	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	194	23	525	62	82	10	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)	263	31	467	56	31	4	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	219	26	513	61	65	8	9	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	201	24	486	58	63	8	22	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	127	15	484	56	84	10	16	2
The school is led and managed effectively	231	27	483	57	60	7	9	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	323	38	448	53	39	5	10	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"> ■ 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.



2 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Mountbatten School, Romsey, SO515SY

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings.

Mountbatten is a good school with many areas of excellence.

- You are very well cared for and supported by the school.
- You achieve very high standards in your work.
- You clearly enjoy school ' this came over very clearly in the student questionnaire and in our discussions with you.
- The school helps you to develop well as young people. We were particularly impressed by how polite, friendly and well-behaved you were. The number of you that take on responsibilities in school is very impressive.

Many things have improved over the last few years. In particular, Key Stage 4 students can now choose from an impressive range of courses. The way in which the school sets targets for you and monitors your progress has also developed.

While most lessons are good (and some are outstanding), we have identified a number of things about lessons that could be improved, for example the way in which teachers use the lesson objectives to check your learning during the lesson. We think this is the most important area for the school to work on, although we have also asked to school to review and develop the Key Stage 3 curriculum even further.

The headteacher and other staff are very ambitious for the school and are working hard to make Mountbatten outstanding. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and know what to do next to continue the school's improvement.

Best wishes from the inspection team.

Yours faithfully

Chris Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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