

Patcham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114608
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	357583
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

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 of pupils on the school roll	959
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracy Edwards
Headteacher	Paula Sargent
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 40 lessons, taught by 39 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, staff and governors. No meeting was held formally with parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at evidence including school policies and self-evaluation, development plans, information about students' performance and minutes of governing body meetings. The team received and analysed questionnaires completed by 224 parents and carers, and others by staff and students.

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

- How well are the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities identified and supported for them to make appropriate progress and attain as well as they can at GCSE.
- Whether teaching provides sufficient challenge and pace so that high and low attainers, boys and girls make effective progress.
- Whether procedures for promoting good attendance have been successful in 2009-10.
- In the light of parental views expressed in the questionnaire, how well behaviour management techniques are used.

Information about the school

Patcham High is an average-sized secondary school with specialist arts status. Proportions are below average for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and for those who speak English as an additional language. An above average proportion of the pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above the national average. Their needs mainly relate to dyslexia, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and speech and language difficulties. The school is part of a local cluster, including primary schools and a special school. Recent awards have included the Artsmark Gold and Healthy Schools status.

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

Patcham High is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher, with the support of the leadership team, has brought about substantial progress over recent years. Firm foundations have been built in many areas of school life which are now bearing fruit, such as students' rising attainment and good personal development. Students remark how much they enjoy school and feel safe. They are very proud of their school and say how much better it is, even compared with a year ago.

Students' attainment improved over the three years up to 2009 and GCSE results in 2010 show that this has been consolidated. Despite good progress through the school in many subjects, including English, attainment at age 16 has been low. Data which tracks students' success indicates that current attainment is higher and students are on course to attain broadly average outcomes by the end of the academic year. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Assessment information for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities shows that not all these students make the progress they could, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Behaviour, much improved since the last inspection, is good, as is the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The system of allocating points, both negative and positive, and the resultant rewards and sanctions, is proving very successful in promoting positive attitudes. Attendance remains satisfactory. Many procedures for improving this are good and much time has been invested in tackling the issue, but the school does not always identify pupils at risk of poor attendance early enough or sufficiently hold them and their parents and/or carers to account.

The quality of teaching, assessment and learning observed was good. All was satisfactory or better, with a few examples of outstanding practice. Teachers relate well to the students and vice versa, and use good subject knowledge effectively to explain ideas and concepts. The challenge and pace of lessons is not always great enough and some tasks are insufficiently well matched to students' abilities and prior learning. The many curriculum pathways and the effective careers guidance enable students to select appropriate courses that meet their widely varying needs. Students appreciate the range of academic and vocational routes, including several college placements. Pastoral care is very good, with highly effective arrangements to help students settle into the school. The vertically arranged tutor groups for Years 7 to 9 are very helpful in promoting inter-year links between students.

The 'jigsaw' of leadership and management fits together exceptionally well as each member responds positively to the well-thought-out school aims. Colleagues in senior and middle leadership teams respect one another's expertise. The drive for higher standards is apparent in the focus on improving teaching and learning and on using data

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to track progress and plan intervention. Leaders practise what they preach, working efficiently with the resources available to generate a cohesive, safe and caring community where each student's worth is appreciated. The trend of successful changes over time, in attainment, progress and students' personal development, as well as effective self-evaluation, provides clear evidence of good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment by ensuring that all teaching includes the right amount of pace and challenge to meet the needs of all students in each class.
- Improve the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, by following up tracking data more carefully and providing immediate support.
- Reduce absence through earlier identification of students at risk, holding them and their parents or carers to account more effectively for their attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most lessons are characterised by students responding enthusiastically to interesting work and making good progress. They learn well when tasks are appropriate for their levels of ability. Students enter the school with substantially below average knowledge and understanding of key areas such as English and mathematics. Attainment in English language has improved to broadly average as a result of the very good progress students are making; the strong focus on literacy throughout the school, particularly reading, has been a key contributory cause. Progress in mathematics and science has not been as strong but data indicates that improvements in teaching and learning are raising attainment. Students make good progress in developing information and communication technology skills, achieving broadly average attainment. Boys' and girls' GCSE results are now similar and tracking data indicates no significant differences between groups of students, with the exception of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, whose progress is satisfactory. Students say that the school is a safe place to be. A Year 11 student reflected on the changes that have taken place since he began in Year 7 and observed that he now feels 'one hundred percent safe'. The role of lead students from Year 11, newly augmented by Year 9 support students, is recognised as making a big contribution to safety and enjoyment across the school site. They are seen as excellent role models in terms of their behaviour and sense of responsibility. As a result, others are confident that if bullying should occur, it will be effectively dealt with by their peers and by adults. Students value the good opportunities they have for sport and physical education, and appreciate the importance of living healthy lifestyles, reflected in the recent award of Healthy School status. The attendance of students who transfer to Patcham from other secondary schools remains a concern, although attendance overall is improving, with fewer persistent absentees and a much reduced level of exclusions. The poor attendance of the few undermines somewhat the generally

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very positive attitudes students have towards post-16 education and training and workplace skills. Students make an important contribution to the community locally and across the city. Much of this is associated with the school's specialism, such as the displays of dance and gymnastics which students performed for many primary pupils in their own schools. The school council's role has hitherto been satisfactory and restricted to improvements to the school environment, but has now changed to include greater involvement in the running of the school; for example, students are now attending parts of departmental meetings. The school provides good opportunities for students to develop a reflective approach, such as the outstanding way in which Year 10 students closely observed, described and then drew a peacock's feather. The positive manner in which students communicate and deal with each other as well as with visitors and staff is an indication of their good personal development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In-school training and coaching of staff, with a strong focus on using assessment data to inform what should be taught, has improved the quality of teaching and learning

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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since the last inspection. In the majority of lessons, a variety of teaching styles with good questioning led to students acquiring knowledge and making good progress. Questions were asked of a wide range of students, testing their understanding and the success of what had been taught. Tracking data is appreciated by students and most teaching staff; the former know their targets and have some understanding of how to improve further. Although relationships usually remain good, the pace of work falls away in those lessons when teachers, not fully aware of students' individual needs, do not make clear what work is expected of them and in what time. The curriculum pathways available, which meet the needs of students very well, include Year 7 and Year 8 transition classes taught by a limited range of staff using primary teaching techniques. This is proving very helpful to students who may struggle to settle into their secondary school. All school staff are involved in modelling the 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions which have proved so successful in raising students' literacy awareness and achievement. Students feel well advised about their option choices, future careers and post-16 education guidance. The impact of the school's arts specialism is strong and apparent in the take-up of subjects in Years 10 and 11, and in students' involvement in extra-curricular activities, such as a local art exhibition. The arts community programme involves successful collaboration with several local schools, which has extended students' range of learning opportunities and resulted in the award of Artsmark Gold status in 2009. Pastoral support given to students in tutor group periods is valued and useful; it includes the setting of half-termly attendance targets for each student, teambuilding exercises and the development of strong bonds between students and their tutors. The school has adopted many strategies to raise attendance, as seen in the clear trend of improvement. It is aware, however, that study of the attendance of particular groups, such as students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other vulnerable students, has not been detailed enough to ensure effective early intervention.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by a team of senior leaders with complementary skills, has established a clear vision for the school, which is being pursued with rigour and enthusiasm. Expectations of higher attainment, even better behaviour, and helpful policies and procedures are at the centre of this improving school. Challenging targets

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and robust monitoring, including an effective focus on lesson observation, are raising the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders and managers are aware that strategies already in place to identify and respond to the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities should be followed up more rigorously and speedily, in order to raise their achievement. Responsibilities of middle leaders are appropriate and mainly implemented well, although some inconsistency remains in their effectiveness. High quality improvement planning includes concise success criteria, reflecting the accurate self-critical approach of the headteacher and governing body. The governing body carries out its role well, having thorough knowledge of the school, holding senior and middle leaders to account for progress made against key objectives and providing the strategic direction. Safeguarding the students has a high priority and is apparent in effective staff appointments procedures, the safe school environment and the attention to detail in the manner in which procedures are followed. Students benefit from the strong partnership with parents and a wide range of agencies. All work together, for example trying to improve attendance and ensuring that the courses of study meet students' needs. Parents are well informed about their children's work; for example, families with Year 10 and 11 students receive half-termly progress information. Regular newsletters, the 'Patcham Post' on the web site and texts to parents are all part of the wide range of approaches intended to maximise effective communication. Equality of opportunity underpins the ethos of the school and is explicitly addressed in key areas of the curriculum. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Courses such as boys' dance challenge stereotypical views effectively. A clear analysis of the context of the school has resulted in a good range of activities that promote community cohesion. A collaborative arts project with a local hospice, the integration of students from a special school and links with schools abroad exemplify this success, which is regularly audited and has a specific focus in the development plan. The school provides satisfactory value for money, working within an agreed deficit budget.

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	2
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

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Questionnaire outcomes indicate that most parents are very pleased with school life, particularly their children's enjoyment of their education. A very small minority felt the school should deal more effectively with behaviour issues. The absence of misbehaviour during the inspection suggested to inspectors that school systems are very effective in managing students' behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	40	124	55	5	2	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	32	134	60	6	3	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	73	33	113	50	9	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	72	32	114	51	8	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	27	132	59	6	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	26	122	54	20	9	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	26	134	60	9	4	3	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)	70	31	121	54	6	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	31	122	43	9	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	24	117	52	21	9	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	25	121	54	15	7	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	86	38	109	49	10	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	44	105	47	7	3	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



17 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Patcham High School, Brighton BN1 8PB

Thank you for your welcome and support during our visit to your school. We greatly enjoyed meeting you.

You told us about the many improvements that have taken place over recent years and how proud you are of your school. We agree with you that the school has improved greatly and is getting better still, particularly with regard to your behaviour. Many of you make good progress with your studies, although your GCSE results are not yet high enough. Those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always make the progress you should. The attendance of a few is not good enough and you could help yourselves, and the school, by coming more regularly to make use of the good opportunities available. The staff care for you very well, the quality of teaching is good overall and a lot of effort has gone into providing courses that meet your needs and prepare you for the next stage in your life. You know how to stay safe, appreciate the importance of living healthy lives and provide good support for each other. Your involvement in community arts performances is very good and your relationships with each other and staff are helpful and positive.

We have asked the headteacher to look at the following areas to help you improve:

- increase the attendance of a small number of you by following up absences as early as possible and rigorously
- make all lessons challenging and well-paced, meeting your needs and helping you to make good progress, no matter what your abilities are
- help those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the best progress you can by checking on your progress regularly, providing support when it is needed.

The headteacher, with the help of governors and the support of senior staff, is doing a very good job improving the school; with your help it will be even better.

Yours sincerely

Peter McGregor

Lead inspector

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