

Portchester Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116418
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312298
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	764
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hilary Small
Headteacher	Mr Roger Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2004
School address	White Hart Lane Portchester Fareham PO16 9BD
Telephone number	02392 364399
Fax number	02392 201528

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Inspection number	312298

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average comprehensive school. The majority of pupils are of a White British heritage, with fewer pupils than usual having English as a second language. The numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and statements of special educational need are well above average. The majority of these students have specific learning, physical, or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is fully resourced to accommodate the needs of those students with physical disabilities. It has a range of community provision, including an on-site nursery, day care and breakfast club. It is a performing arts specialist school. The school has recently experienced a period of significant staffing upheaval, particularly involving some subject managers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its students. It has some outstanding features. These include the leadership team's capacity to ensure any necessary improvements are carried out, the learners contribution to their community and the very high levels of care, guidance and support that it provides for students, including those with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. The school also adopts an excellent approach to ensuring that all students are included in school life and are enabled to achieve the best they can.

At the start of Year 7 standards are broadly average, although there are some current year groups that entered with below average standards. Achievement is good overall, but for Year 11 leavers it was outstanding in 2006 and good in 2007. The recent serious staffing problems had a detrimental effect on standards, but this situation has now been addressed. For example, in the 2007 GCSEs, the standards for the best 8 subjects including English and mathematics dipped slightly, but the trend, over recent years is of above average standards. Current Year 11 students are on track to attain above average standards.

A major reason for good achievement is the good teaching and learning. There are very positive relationships in lessons, with students willing to contribute to discussion. Teachers plan lesson activities that meet the different learning styles of students. These include the use of games, team activities, discussions and information and communication technology. However, not all lessons make full use of these opportunities to engage the interest of all students. Consequently, in a few lessons progress is not as rapid. Marking does not always fully inform the students about the next step in their learning, and some teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan work that challenges students of different abilities.

The personal development of students is good. Effective work by adults and students based on the Rights, Respect and Responsibility (RRR) programme have improved the attitudes and behaviour of students. One older student commented that the school is, 'a nicer place, a better environment to work in'. Through the highly developed links with local partners, and through the performing arts the students are enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the community. Not least are the musical and other links with South Africa. The recent visit resulted in one student describing how profoundly she had been affected by a visit to a South African township. Such experiences contribute significantly to the pupils' good spiritual moral social and cultural education. The pupils have a very heightened sense of safe practice. This is very well seen in the smooth and seamless movement around the school for both able and disabled students.

Students also progress well because they are settled, and receive exceptional levels of care, guidance and support. Procedures for ensuring health and safety and the well-being of students are rigorous and known by adults. Students, through the RRR committee are very well involved in monitoring and contributing to the promotion of positive student attitudes. There is a steadfast commitment to include all students in school life, and very effective use of external agencies and educational partnerships contribute well to this. The facilities offered to disabled students and their integration into mainstream education are outstanding and enable them to achieve well.

The curriculum has been reviewed, and a wider range of vocational subjects introduced. These meet well the needs of all students, including those with gifts and talents and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The performing arts curriculum has been well extended in

music, and good progress is being made in extending the curriculum to include performance-related subjects such as media studies. This constitutes good improvement since the last inspection.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher leads the school very effectively and has been particularly successful in ensuring the students achieve well. Very ably supported by a highly focused senior management team, the school conducts very thorough monitoring. This contributed to improvements in achievement despite the staffing problems experienced recently. The progress of students, whether in the academic or pastoral sense, is very well tracked. This enables the school to quickly diagnose, and provide support for, any additional academic, social or personal need. Staff training and development are used well to support changes; the school rightly prides itself on its training in leadership skills. Governance is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teaching matches the standard of the best so that all students are fully engaged in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Given their starting points, students achieve well and attain above average standards by the time they leave school at the end of Year 11. The percentage of pupils gaining five A* to G is significantly above average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2007 were below average. More stability in staffing has resulted in improvements in the standards attained by current year groups which are now broadly average. In the performing arts field, students did particularly well in music in the 2007 GCSE with all obtaining A* to C. Dance and drama are both on target to improve their results in the current Year 11. The school is aware that last year there were some differences in standards between GCSE subjects. For example, high attainers did well in design technology and communication studies. In geography and history students did less well, partly as a consequence of staff changes. Senior leaders are now carefully monitoring these subject areas. Those pupils receiving work-related learning also progressed well in their learning. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good progress, partly due to the additional help provided to improve their basic skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The highly inclusive nature of the school community, promoted by the leadership and the RRR committee, significantly enhances the personal development of all students. A small number of parents expressed some concern over behaviour. However, observation showed, and students told of good behaviour. Students are respectful of the needs of others. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school raises well their awareness of the importance of physical exercise and offers good choices of diet. Students have positive attitudes to learning. For example, in one lesson students had voluntarily used their holiday time to develop their ideas. The school has correctly detected a need to raise some students' expectations of what they can achieve. The students are well prepared with basic skills for their future economic well being in employment or training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In most lessons teachers set out clearly what they want the students to learn. They make strong links with previous learning and keep objectives and key ideas prominent throughout. Consequently, students gain a considerable sense of achievement. Teachers monitor activities well and give clear time limits. This adds pace to lessons and focuses the attention of students. Many students find the guidance given by teachers valuable in showing what they need to do to improve their work but some marking is not focused sharply enough on the next steps in learning. Relationships are generally very good, because teachers are clearly appreciative of, and support the efforts students are making. Occasionally, a small minority of students are not sufficiently interested by the tasks they are set, lose concentration and do not make the good progress seen in most lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has successfully made changes to the curriculum which now has an increased flexibility to meet the needs of students. Higher attaining students now have the potential to sit some GCSE earlier, giving them the opportunity to follow other GCSE option subjects. Year 8 students sit Key Stage 3 examinations enabling them to follow GCSE courses from Year 9. Effective links with work related learning partners and colleges help ensure the delivery of a wider range of subjects for older students. A concerted effort has been made to extend the range of performing arts options. A creative and media diploma is being introduced for older students. In music, particularly good links have been forged in the local community through the annual school Arts Festival, but also with schools abroad through the Portchester Panyard steel band. Students have visited a partner school in South Africa, donating steel pans and developing cultural and educational links particularly in the performing arts. Dance and drama contribute through whole school productions and special concerts, but the school acknowledges that staffing difficulties have reduced the impact of these courses. These have now been resolved. Students benefit from a good personal, social and health education curriculum, and citizenship supports well the RRR programme. Careers guidance, option advice, work experience and college events ensure students are well supported through these important decision making processes. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of well attended clubs. There is a good range of successful sports teams.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care for the individual student is central to the ethos of the school and is an outstanding feature. This helps ensure that all students can access their learning and achieve well. Students say they feel very safe, secure, and know who to approach if they have a problem. Senior managers, the community education leader, as well as achievement leaders and their pastoral assistants are particularly involved in ensuring that students are safe and well supported. They monitor the implementation of, and continually review, the exceptionally robust procedures for health, safety and child protection. There are very good, regular academic performance reviews where student's personal targets are updated. These ensure that students' personal and academic performance is closely tracked, and intervention is quickly on hand when necessary.

The school leads a number of very successful community facilities including day care for the elderly, a nursery and a youth centre. Consequently, students benefit from contact with different age ranges, and this contributes significantly to their personal development. Older students are trained in the youth centre to mentor Year 7 students to make the primary/secondary transition easier.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school benefits from high quality leadership and management. This is demonstrated by improving achievement and the considerable impact of the RRR programme on student attitudes and behaviour. There are intensive intervention strategies in place that enhance the achievement of the gifted and talented students, and students with learning difficulties and physical disability. Leaders produce very effective analysis of subject performance and this effectively guides development planning. The excellence of these reviews is, in a few cases, hampered by long term staff absence. The school manages its resources superbly, providing excellent facilities for all students. The leadership and management have provided a truly inclusive school where all students have equal opportunities. The very robust monitoring, effective development planning, the broad curriculum and the success in improving achievement and student inclusion, all reflect the school's excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Portchester Community School, Fareham, PO16 9BD

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed our visit and listened carefully to the many things you told us about the school. We would like to say how well the students from the school council and the Rights, Respect and Responsibility committee represented the school. Their views were very informative. We agree with you that your school is good. We also feel, like you, that it does many things extremely well indeed. These include.

- The good progress you make in your studies.
- The excellent level of care, support and guidance the school provides. You told us you feel safe, that behaviour has really improved, and that new students to the school comment on the 'happy' environment.
- You all benefit from the outstanding links the school has developed, locally, nationally and internationally.
- Those of you with physical disabilities benefit from excellent facilities, and are cared for extremely well. All of you are to be congratulated for the way in which you work together and respect each other.
- You told us how you enjoy most lessons, and that the school is providing more opportunities for you to experience different courses. Congratulations on the various music productions you provide for the school and other communities. We agree with you that dance and drama could have a higher profile. The school leadership realise this and have good plans to provide wider opportunities in the performing arts.
- Your headteacher and other leaders in the school have improved things considerably in recent years - behaviour is one area you mentioned. Their work enables the school to run smoothly and contributes very well to the very positive environment in which you learn. It is a place where all students are included, and enabled to learn and achieve.

We have asked the school to ensure that inconsistencies in some aspects of teaching are addressed so that all your lessons are good.

We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector