

Portchester Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116418
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357959
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	769
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Small
Headteacher	Roger Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2011
School address	White Hart Lane Potchester Fareham PO16 9BD
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Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Inspection number	357959

Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	0
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 38 lessons taught by 34 teachers. They held meetings with students, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, records, assessments and other documents including questionnaires filled in by staff, students and 124 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Have the school's actions in the last year led to raised attainment and better progress?
- Does teaching have the consistency to inspire good learning and progress?
- How effective is the monitoring that is carried out by leaders, managers and the governing body?

Information about the school

Portchester Community School is smaller than most secondary schools and is a specialist school in performing arts. Almost all students are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; the largest group of these students has moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of students with statements has risen in recent years and is well above average. The school has an above average turnover of students. It holds the Unicef Rights Respecting School award.

The school has resourced provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities that specialises in physical disabilities. It also includes Nursery, pre-school, after-school and holiday care provision for 82 children, which was also inspected.

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

3

Main findings

Portchester Community School is satisfactory. It has a number of good and some outstanding features. Changes to the areas from which the school takes students in recent years have reduced attainment on entry. By the end of Year 11, attainment is below average. Given their starting points, students' achievement is satisfactory. Recent actions by the school have improved teaching, and students' progress is now good. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and provides children with a good start to their education. Most parents and carers hold very favourable opinions of the school, one typically commenting, 'My son has gained confidence and independence. The teaching and support is excellent.'

The curriculum is adapted well to students' needs and provides an important element in students' good and sometimes excellent personal development. For example, the active involvement of members of the emergency services in school plays a significant role in developing students' excellent understanding of how to stay safe. This strength is enhanced by the school's excellent safeguarding procedures. Outstanding partnerships and community cohesion do much to widen students' horizons. High quality care and excellent support for all students, including those with physical disabilities and moderate learning difficulties, ensure progress is even across all groups and there is good equality of opportunity for all.

Good teaching has boosted progress this year but has not yet had a significant impact on attainment. Positive relationships make learning enjoyable for most students. Some inconsistencies remain because teachers do not always provide work to stretch all groups of students, especially the most able, and the pace of learning in a minority lessons is too slow.

The pattern of low attainment has spurred school leaders to concentrate on improving teaching and other support for learning. This has led to an improvement in students' progress. Monitoring of lessons has been successfully undertaken by senior leaders and has now been expanded to include all leaders and managers. However, lesson observations by some leaders and managers do not always focus fully on students' learning and so are not fully effective in promoting the best practice. However, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and has influenced the drawing up of pertinent plans for the future. Leaders and managers share an ambitious commitment to improvement and transmit this to all staff, who work very well as a team in their drive to raise attainment. While they have yet to have a full impact on raising students' attainment, the recent improvements in teaching and the increasing rates of pupils' progress demonstrate that the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by January 2012 so that:
 - at least 80% of teaching is good or better by ensuring it is always challenging and that the inconsistencies in the pace of learning in a small minority of lessons are eliminated
 - the monitoring of teaching by all leaders and managers has a sharper focus on students' learning and contributes to improved academic achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with below average attainment; these levels have declined in recent years as the school has taken more students from areas of high deprivation. For example, the attainment of current Year 11 students is below average, but the starting points of this group were particularly low and their progress is good. While attainment is improving it remains below average, overall. The school reacted vigorously to particularly disappointing Year 11 examination results in 2010. More comprehensive assessment and analysis have informed the more effective allocation of resources to improve progress. For example, many underachieving groups have benefitted from targeted interventions that are successfully boosting students' confidence and progress. Furthermore, these accurate data are used well to hold teachers to account for the progress in their classes and to promote teaching skills.

The proactive approach of leaders and managers has improved learning, which is now good. In most lessons progress is good because pupils enjoy learning and their work is relevant and challenging. For example, a physical education lesson saw the rapid development of Year 8 students' triple jump skills because the teacher had devised activities to explain, demonstrate and evaluate the correct methods and because his lively, energetic delivery fully engaged students' interest. Very effective support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with physical disabilities, ensures that they make good progress, similar to their peers. Given their starting points, the achievement of all groups of students is satisfactory.

Students behave well in lessons and outside them. They are polite and engage well with staff and one another. This has a positive impact on their learning. Students' respect for their physically disabled peers is evident in every aspect of school life and as a result all groups of students feel extremely safe in school. They are informed well about health issues and most make appropriate choices in what they eat and in their exercise regime, the latter being promoted well by numerous, very popular extra-curricular sporting opportunities. Given their weaker starting points and good progress in their learning and personal development, students are effectively prepared for the future through numerous vocational opportunities offered in the curriculum. Attendance has improved because of the very good work done by the school, and is above average.

Many students take an active role in various groups, for example the school council, which provides a good forum for their views and promotes a better school. Students are proud of their school and keen to take on responsibilities. They take part in local events and festivals and have positive relationships with overseas schools through visits and exchanges. Students' involvement in the local community through the annual arts festival and other events is highly valued.

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The role of the Unicef Rights, Respect and Responsibility initiative in the school has had a positive influence on students' development. They think deeply about social issues, strongly challenging racism and inequality and have a strong moral compass. Well informed by the curriculum, they have very good insights into the cultural similarities and differences within society.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is very well planned to meet students' varied needs. Provision for physically disabled students is outstanding and closely tailored to each individual. The performing arts specialism provides interesting themes and some strong provision in music and dance. Good links between subjects lead to interesting lessons, for example when information and communication technology is used to promote drafting of presentations in English lessons. The central role of the Rights, Respect and Responsibility initiative is well planned and provides excellent opportunities for students' personal development. Numerous partnerships, for example with local universities, provide effective additional learning opportunities but have yet to have a full impact on raising students' attainment.

Most teaching engages and motivates students. As a result students make good progress in a large majority of lessons. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have positive relationships with students, who behave well. Students with physical disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants and take a full part in almost all activities.

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Teachers question students well to check their understanding, but some lessons can be dominated by teachers leaving students as passive participants.

Increasingly detailed analysis of assessment data has provided the school with a better understanding of how to boost progress. This has led to more interventions, closely targeted to meet students' needs. Assessment data are readily available to all staff and extensively used to track progress and analyse the success of the strategies employed. In some lessons teachers do not use assessment information to plan for all levels of ability; in such instances some groups, particularly the more able, do not have enough challenging work. Occasionally activities lack deadlines and students become lethargic, slowing the pace of learning.

The school provides a very caring and welcoming environment. Outstandingly well-planned transition strategies put students at the centre of arrangements to move both into and out of the school and significantly reduce their uncertainties. Strategies to support particular groups of students, such as those who are physically disabled, are very well considered and instrumental in these students' full integration into school life. Well-focused support, particularly from teaching assistants, helps students with statements of educational needs to make good progress. The work of the coordinators for special educational needs and/or disabilities is often outstanding and widely recognised in the local authority. The impact of this very strong provision is not yet fully evident in academic outcomes for students.

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 shares with staff a fundamental commitment to students' well-being. He promotes and fully endorses the high quality care that leads to numerous good outcomes for students. Leaders and managers have raised their game in the last year, responding vigorously to low attainment. The senior leadership team is effectively tackling key areas of weakness in teaching and assessment. This is having an impact on improving classroom practice that is boosting students' learning. Increasingly effective use of assessment has enabled the school to target resources to areas and students where progress is faltering and this has a positive impact on progress. While outcomes for students are satisfactory, they are improving strongly. Good leadership of the resourced provision for the physically disabled ensures these students' continuing well-being.

The more analytical evaluation of assessment information has led to sharper and more relevant planning for the future. Monitoring of teaching has become more robust and has improved practice. However, the school is aware that there has been too much focus by

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some leaders and managers on teachers' methodology and not enough on students' learning, so occasional teaching inconsistencies remain.

Members of the governing body monitor and challenge the school well. They hold the school to account, are influential in its strategic direction and have played a key role in changes made to the assessment system since 2010. They are trained well and regularly consult with student groups, such as the school council. The governing body has good arrangements to ensure the school's safety and security. Safeguarding is outstanding. All policies and procedures are fully up to date and adults are thoroughly trained. Powerful work with other key agencies maintains a high standard of staff skills. The school site is very safe; some parents expressed concerns about the busy road outside the school but close liaison with the police and the local councillor has helped to minimise the risks.

The school understands its local context very well through its focus on the Rights Respecting Schools initiative. The positive influence of this is widespread and has an impact on students' curriculum and other experiences. Students applaud the cohesion of the school and are empowered to actively engage with numerous organisations locally, nationally and internationally.

The school has fostered excellent links through the creative arts partnership that accompanies its specialist status. Strong liaisons with primary schools and further and higher education institutions minimise students' uncertainty at times of transition. Portchester's work as a community school encompasses excellent civic links and an extensive on-site adult education programme. Close links with outside agencies support the potentially vulnerable students very well. Partnerships that focus on students' rights and responsibilities have a significant impact on their spiritual, moral and social development. Consultation with parents and carers is regular, through the parents' forum. Parents' and carers' views were influential on the school's decision not to reduce the number of parents' evenings. Communication through newsletters and the website is good but the school acknowledges that communication about homework is inconsistent.

The full integration of physically disabled students is a notable feature of the school's commitment to equal opportunities. The consistent progress of all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, reflects the school's close attention to inclusion. The few students from ethnic minorities report a very low incidence of racism and no discrimination.

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress across all four Early Years Foundation Stage settings. They are happy and enjoy learning to play together safely. They are physically active and, when the school provides food, as it does in the Nursery, they eat healthily. Children develop independence, happily helping to tidy up when requested.

The four settings work well together and provide complementary opportunities for children to have fun and good progress in all the different areas of learning. Planning is focused well on individuals and close observations enable staff to record what each child is able to do as they learn. However, this information is insufficiently analysed to provide leaders with a clearer picture of strengths and weaknesses in children's learning. Children play happily outdoors and in, but the facilities outdoors do not promote literacy and numeracy as strongly as in the inside environment. Relationships are good and the occasional inappropriate behaviour is very well dealt with.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led by the leaders who manage each setting and the community manager, who has overall responsibility. Children's safety and well-being are paramount. Relationships with parents and carers are very positive and support children's development strongly. Good links with outside agencies ensure that children experiencing barriers to learning are swiftly identified and quickly receive appropriate support.

The provision for children aged nought to three complies with the requirements for registration. It is closely integrated with the provision for older children. Leadership is good, resulting in the younger children being safe and happy. They make good progress in their personal development due to the good care provided and positive relationships across the setting.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire express very favourable views of the school. A very large majority are happy with their child's experience at the school and report that their child enjoys school. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns over support given for learning, over how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and about the way the school takes account of their concerns. Inspection evidence shows students are supported well in their learning and the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour. It also indicates that there are good procedures to take account of parents' and carers' concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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

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

The inspection team received 124 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 769 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	27	79	64	7	6	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	36	29	81	65	7	6	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	27	76	61	10	8	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	25	78	63	11	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	22	18	88	71	7	6	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	14	70	56	28	23	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	15	75	60	20	16	2	2
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)	26	21	76	61	12	10	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	28	68	55	10	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	12	73	59	21	17	9	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	19	63	51	18	15	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	35	28	68	55	10	8	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	31	68	55	6	5	2	2

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 all 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



26 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Portchester Community School, Portchester, PO16 9BD

Many thanks for the welcome that you gave to the inspectors when we recently visited your school. It was a pleasure meeting and talking to you; we would like to congratulate you on your good behaviour.

Portchester School provides a satisfactory education and has a number of good and better features. However, while your progress is improving and is now good, your attainment is still below average.

Important strengths of the school are that:

- the curriculum is very well adapted to your needs and, through excellent partnerships and community cohesion, provides you with interesting learning opportunities
- you are very well cared for and your personal development in areas like feeling safe and your contribution to the community are excellent
- teaching is good and promotes good and improving progress
- leadership and management are good.

We have asked the school to raise attainment by:

- improving teaching further so that it is always challenging and all lessons have a good pace
- checking the quality of teaching more carefully to increase the emphasis on your learning.

Once again, thanks you for your help. It was a pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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