

Melbourn Village College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110868
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325246
Inspection dates	30 September-1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Paula Heaney HMI

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	539
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Smith
Headteacher	Mrs E Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	5-6 October 2005
School address	The Moor Melbourn Hertfordshire SG8 6EF
Telephone number	01763 223400
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work, looked at improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, records of classroom observations, attendance data, policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding and child protection, questionnaires from students and staff, and 71 parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress of boys, particularly middle ability from White British backgrounds.
- how well students achieve in the main school at Key Stage 4, specifically in English and mathematics.
- the impact of strategies to improve teaching, learning and assessment to ensure students reach their potential.
- how well the curriculum and other activities meet the needs of all students, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- the quality of support, particularly for those with a history of poor attendance.
- the impact of leadership and management on improving performance effectively
- why the performance of the school had declined since the last inspection and whether sufficient progress has been made to address the areas for improvement identified.

Information about the school

Melbourn Village College is a small, rural school whose catchment area contains wards with a higher percentage of high social class households than the national average. Standards on entry to the school are just above the national average. Around 5% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is significantly lower than the national average and the proportion of students with special education needs is just below the national average.

Melbourn Village College was designated a specialist performing arts college from 2002, redesignated in September 2007, and has Arts Mark Gold status. The school achieved the Sports Mark in July 2008 and Healthy Schools Status in July 2009. The headteacher (warden) has been in post since September 2007.

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

Melbourn Village College is a satisfactory and improving school. Following a decline in attainment in English and mathematics since the last inspection, efforts by leaders and managers to secure more stable and specialist staffing in both departments have been successful. Together with a focused strategy and appropriate actions, targeted specifically on improving standards, examination results in 2009 improved significantly in both subjects. School data indicate a sharp rise in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs grade A*-C including English and mathematics. Student achievement is satisfactory and improving.

Leaders and managers have identified accurately areas for improvement, specifically the inconsistencies in teaching and learning and the need to increase the proportion of lessons where the quality of learning is good or better. Although some lessons are of a good standard, others are not sufficiently carefully planned to include activities which challenge and stretch the most able or enable those with special educational needs to make progress which is better than satisfactory. Work is underway to develop best practice, including creating more opportunities for students to assess their progress, but actions to address weaknesses in teaching and learning are not yet consistently effective across subjects and departments. While some students receive detailed feedback on how well they are doing others do not, or have yet to have work marked.

Subjects, options and courses increasingly meet the needs of students, particularly in performing arts and in vocational areas. Whilst the quality of care and guidance students receive is good, support for students is satisfactory, including those with special educational needs. Data on students' prior attainment are not used sufficiently well in lesson planning and in supporting students to reach their potential. Most students say they enjoy school and the variety of option choices and extra-curricula activities on offer.

A proportion of the 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?

- Sharpen the focus of leadership on improving teaching and learning further, so as to accelerate the progress made by students.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching in order to improve students' progress and raise attainment further by ensuring that teachers:
 - use information on students' prior attainment more effectively in the planning of lessons to ensure sufficient pace, challenge and student involvement in learning
 - develop a wider range of strategies for assessment to check students' understanding in lessons
 - mark students' work more frequently and provide more detailed feedback to inform them how to improve.
- Develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring the learning and progress made by individual groups of learners in order to plan more effective support.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In 2009 school data indicate attainment by the end of Year 11 improved to 64% for five or more GCSEs grade A*-C including English and mathematics. Efforts to improve student achievement and examination results in English and mathematics have been successful for most students, particularly for middle ability boys. More regular assessment and monitoring of progress, together with strategies such as introducing course work days and pre-examination revision breakfasts, have contributed positively to this improvement. Underachievement by a small number of upper ability boys and students of lower ability are appropriate priorities for improvement in the coming year. Evidence from lesson observations and in viewing students' work demonstrates they make satisfactory progress. In some lessons progress is good, such as that seen in the specialist subjects of dance and drama, in French, physical education (PE) and on the society, health and development Diploma. Participation and attainment is increasing in the specialist subjects, although challenging targets in music were not met. Data are available to teaching staff to assist them in their lesson planning for students with special education needs but it is not used sufficiently well to ensure students make progress that is better than satisfactory. The very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds made good progress in 2009 and the attainment gap between boys and girls narrowed.

Other key features of students' outcomes include:

- Students feel safe in and around the school and say that bullying is dealt with effectively.

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- Behaviour seen on inspection was good, although a small minority of students and parents are concerned about how consistently it is managed in lessons to avoid disruption to others.
- Actions to improve attendance have been successful and students attend lessons punctually.
- Participation rates in PE clubs outside of timetabled lessons and in interschool competitions are good.
- Students particularly enjoy the regular performances of plays, the orchestra and sporting activities.
- The school meets its statutory requirements for religious education.

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	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

Strategies to improve teaching, learning and assessment to ensure students reach their potential are having a positive impact, although not consistently so. In the most effective lessons, careful attention to the individual needs of students is evident. In these lessons activities are well matched to their abilities and aspirations, regular checks on learning take place and students know how well they are progressing. Too many lessons are, however, not planned sufficiently well to incorporate a variety of learning activities..Checks on students' learning and understanding are insufficient and there is little use of targeted questioning. In these lessons students are more passive and behaviour sometimes deteriorates. Plans to develop assessment opportunities within lessons are at an early stage, and in most lessons, opportunities

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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to assess progress more frequently are missed. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Some marking is detailed, with spelling and grammatical errors checked and comments made to help students improve. However, this is not the case in all lessons.

Leaders and managers have broadened the range of courses on offer through close partnership working with other schools and a local further education college. The range of vocational courses and subjects to extend the most able is expanding. Courses in society, health and development and in construction are already available to students and a Diploma course in creative and media studies planned for September 2010.

Arrangements to ensure Year 7 students settle into the school are very effective, including the use of prefects as guides in the first week of term. Students appreciate the guidance they receive regarding option choices in year 10 and progression opportunities beyond the school. The support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory, although the effectiveness of support provided by teaching assistants is monitored inconsistently across the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are having a positive impact in improving the quality of provision across the school and recognise there is still much to be done. They have identified most strengths and weaknesses, including areas for improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff morale is good. Staffing in the English and mathematics departments is more stable, enabling leaders and managers to focus on improving the underperformance in these subjects more successfully. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities. They are well informed of school performance and are taking a more active role in the school through departmental links. Governors provide sufficient challenge to leaders and managers. Targets are now more suitably challenging and aspirational. Improvement planning is rightly focused on raising achievement but in relation to improving teaching and learning, lacks sharpness in terms of what is to be achieved and by when.

The school is committed to equality of opportunity. The performance of different groups of students is monitored appropriately. Safeguarding procedures meet current

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requirements. Effective procedures are in place to ensure students' safety with close liaison with key agencies to ensure the safeguarding of more vulnerable students. A wide range of activities and visits promote a good understanding of the local community and its contexts. The school recognises work to promote community cohesion in the wider community is in its early stages. Actions to improve communication with parents and carers are underway.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents who responded are supportive of the school, although a small minority were concerned about how consistently poor behaviour is dealt with, whether their child's needs were being met sufficiently well and communication. Parents report that staff are helpful and supportive and that the students are happy at school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Melbourn Village College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspection team received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 539 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	35%	39	55%	6	8%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	15	21%	49	69%	6	8%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child’s progress	9	13%	42	59%	6	8%	3	4%
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	18%	33	46%	10	14%	2	3%
The teaching is good at this school	15	21%	35	49%	12	17%	1	1%
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	9	13%	36	51%	17	24%	2	3%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	18%	48	68%	9	13%	0	0%
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)	13	18%	41	58%	9	13%	1	1%
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	23%	34	48%	17	24%	1	1%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	7%	35	49%	14	20%	8	11%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	10%	39	55%	13	18%	3	4%
The school is led and managed effectively	8	11%	39	55%	13	18%	5	7%
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	17	24%	38	54%	12	17%	3	4%

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 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

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 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.



2 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Melbourn Village College, Melbourn, SG8 6EF

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First, I would like to thank you for your openness, friendliness and courtesy during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We found your behaviour is good in most lessons. Your attendance is improving.

The inspection found that yours is a satisfactory school. Your results at the end of Year 11 last year improved significantly, with more students gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics than in the previous two years. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some lessons are good, but others do not meet your needs and interests fully, or challenge you sufficiently well. Most of you enjoy school. You appreciate the sporting activities and that the school is tidy. However a small minority of you are concerned about how consistently poor behaviour is dealt with in lessons and how often you receive feedback from teachers on how you are doing.

Staff believe you can make better progress and we agree. As a result, we have asked the school to improve the rate of progress you make at school by:

- increasing the proportion of good and better lessons across the school by ensuring your lessons are carefully planned to meet your needs and providing comments on your marked work to help you improve
- using assessment information to ensure you receive appropriate support to reach your potential.

You can help by continuing to behave well, attending regularly and by letting your teachers know how you learn best.

We wish you well with your future studies.

Best wishes

Paula Heaney
Her Majesty's Inspector

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