

Palatine Community Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119769
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	339530
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,061
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nina Hodgson
Headteacher	Mr Chris Powell
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students, the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents that included school improvement planning, the self-evaluation form and policies relating to safeguarding. A scrutiny of 153 parental questionnaires was undertaken.

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

- improvements in attainment, learning and progress especially for girls and literacy
- the effectiveness of new policies in managing and encouraging good behaviour and attendance
- the consistency and effectiveness of teaching in promoting learning and progress
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels in bringing about improved outcomes for students and quality of provision
- the planning, provision and evaluation of community cohesion
- the support for more vulnerable students, including transient students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average with more boys than girls. A well above average proportion of students is eligible for free school meals. A smaller than average proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups, of which there are a very few whose first language is not English. There is an above average proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities but fewer students than is usually found have a statement of need. The proportion of students joining or leaving the school at times other than the usual start in Year 7 is above average. A very few students are looked after by persons other than their immediate family.

The school has had sports college status since 2004 and English became the second specialism in 2007. The school receives designated funding to support students with moderate learning difficulties from a neighbouring special school.

The school has gained the Healthy Schools Awards, Artsmark and Investors in People. The school has been supported as a National Challenge School for just over one year.

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

Palatine is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. Its strengths include:

- good support and care for students, particularly for those deemed more vulnerable, reinforced by strong partnerships with local support agencies
- the school being a positive hub for the local community, with well established partnerships with services that provide well for both students and the local community
- a good curriculum that meets students' different needs and interests which is helping to improve attendance, attitudes and achievement
- students' positive approach to staying healthy and their good level of participation in sport
- students' good contribution to the local community, particularly the work of students as leaders in their own school and leaders of sport in local primary schools.

Recently strengthened leadership and staffing, well supported by the National Challenge programme, is leading to significantly increased attainment and improved quality of learning, progress and teaching. Systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work are securely in place but are not always focused rigorously enough on the impact of the school's work on the outcomes for different groups of students, nor are the views of students taken fully into account.

Students' attainment by the time they leave school at age 16, although low, is rising rapidly and their achievement when their low starting point is taken into account is satisfactory. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics increased substantially in 2009 and the school exceeded its challenging targets. Students' current work and information on their progress indicate that standards are continuing to rise.

Learning, progress and teaching are satisfactory. An increasing proportion of good lessons, where students are fully engaged and enjoying learning, is helping to accelerate progress. There are still too many lessons where the pace of learning is slow, or students are not fully challenged.

Leaders are beginning to bring about improvements in attendance and behaviour. Attendance is low but improving and the school exceeded its challenging targets for

attendance in 2009. Behaviour is satisfactory and improving. Given the improvements the school is making, leaders are demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve the school further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment across the school and accelerate progress by:
 - increasing the proportion of good or better teaching so that the pace of learning is brisk and tasks are challenging and well matched to individual needs in more lessons.
- Improve attendance by:
 - extending the support provided to reach more students who find it difficult to attend school regularly, and their families.
- Improve the rigour of the evaluation of the school's work by:
 - scrutinising more closely the impact of the actions taken on the outcomes for different groups of students
 - taking greater account of the views of students.

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

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Learning and progress are accelerating and the school's successful focus on identifying and supporting underachieving students has led to their improved success, especially in English and mathematics and for girls. In the increasing proportion of lessons where learning and progress are good, students enjoy learning and work well together in pairs and groups discussing their work and cooperating well to fulfil tasks that they find interesting and challenging. In the vast majority of lessons students are settled and engaged in learning and behaviour is good. Occasionally, low level disruption by students is not well managed and is allowed to slow down learning. Students' achievement when their starting points are taken into account is satisfactory. Improving skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are preparing students for their future satisfactorily. Attainment in the specialist subjects of physical education, sports studies and English, taken by all students, although below average, is rising rapidly.

The majority of the substantial number of students who join the school at times other than the usual start, many of whom arrive with a history of poor attendance and achievement, make satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and are well supported in class and when receiving specialist support. The very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other students.

Students' involvement in developing a clear code of conduct known as the 'The Palatine Way' that outlines and encourages everyone to take full responsibility for their actions is helping to bring about improved behaviour and attitudes to learning. Inspectors agree with the small minority of students who, in responding to the questionnaire, did not consider behaviour to be good. Although most students conduct themselves responsibly, there is some unnecessary boisterousness in crowded corridors that some students find intimidating. The high number of exclusions, the result of the school's deliberate use of exclusion to manage unacceptable behaviour, has reduced significantly this term. Behaviour overall is satisfactory.

Students are well briefed in how to keep themselves safe in relation to potential hazards such as alcohol, smoking and the Internet. Most students feel safe and secure in school and appreciate the range of adults who are available to support them. Incidents of bullying are usually dealt with effectively, although a very few students and parents were not happy that problems have been totally resolved.

The school is working effectively to support many students and their families, especially those with a very poor history of attendance. As a result of this, together with an improved curriculum and more lessons that interest and motivate students, attendance is improving and there are fewer persistent absentees.

Students develop an understanding of different world religions and cultures through work carried out across the subjects of the curriculum. Their understanding of the varied cultures represented in modern day Britain is more limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupil with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well structured and usually include a good variety of learning activities that engage students actively in their learning. ICT is used well to support learning. Relationships between staff and students are generally good and students' behaviour is usually well managed. Students enjoy most lessons and are well motivated. Students know their targets which they find helpful and encouraging and they know

what the class is expected to learn in each lesson. Tasks are not always matched closely enough to their needs. The pace of learning is slower in some lessons when teachers spend too much time talking. Marking provides useful guidance to students on how to improve, particularly their literacy skills.

The Year 7 learning base supports the transition from primary to secondary school well. The improvement of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through work across the range of subjects is well planned. 'Super Learning Days' that provide intense learning in citizenship and personal social and health education are enjoyed by students. Effective partnership with further education, schools and other providers is enhancing the motivation and success of students from age 14. Specialist college status has improved opportunities for students to gain accreditation in sport and leadership. The varied extra-curricular activities are well supported and provide very good opportunities in sport and performing arts especially. Additional revision and booster sessions to support academic success are a key feature of the curriculum.

Well-organised arrangements for care, support and guidance that include the use of non-teaching pastoral leaders ensure that all students are well supported and cared for. There are striking examples of support for more vulnerable individuals that have resulted in these students feeling settled and secure, enjoying school and making good progress in their personal development. These include students who are looked after by those other than immediate family and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students from a nearby special school benefit from the school's provision and are well integrated into classes alongside other students.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels, governors, and staff all share a strong commitment to improvement and ensuring that every child, whatever their background and circumstances, is well cared for and supported. The school's accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses leads to plans and action that are well focused on the correct priorities and is resulting in improvements in attainment, progress and learning. Effective systems to track students' progress are helping to identify underachievement quickly and ensure that intervention by pastoral and academic staff is successful in accelerating progress. Systems recently introduced to develop an overall ethos supportive of learning are beginning to have an impact: for example, 'The Palatine Way' and the system of 'Restorative Justice' are beginning to result in improved behaviour and attitudes.

All staff are benefiting from well planned professional development that is leading to improved teaching and learning in classrooms and greater confidence in the ability to

lead staff through key developments. Governors are well informed of the school's performance and hold leaders to account.

The school is committed to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. The school analyses the overall success of different groups of students but does not always analyse their progress at different points in the year across all outcomes, such as attendance and behaviour.

Students gain an understanding of different cultures and religions though the curriculum but they have a limited awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity of modern day British society. Governors are not fully aware of the statutory requirement to plan and evaluate provision for community cohesion. Safeguarding arrangements are in line with government requirements. The school has a realistic understanding of risk and arrangements with other agencies to keep students safe, particularly those deemed most vulnerable, are particularly effective.

The school works hard to engage parents and help them to support their children's learning. The recently formed Parent Focus Group is functioning well and the school is responding to the issues they raise. However, the school is aware that there remain a considerable number of parents that the school needs to involve more closely in supporting their children's learning and development.

These are the grades for the 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

Most parents responding to the parents' questionnaire are supportive of the school. They consider that their children enjoy school and that their children are kept safe. They are happy that their children are taught well and are making appropriate progress and that they are well informed of their children's progress. Most are happy that the school is meeting their child's particular needs. A small minority of parents do not consider that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors agree with most of the positive views of parents. Inspectors found that teaching is satisfactory and improving, and that incidents of inappropriate behaviour were tackled by the school appropriately.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Palatine Community Sports 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 153 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,061 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	35	89	58	7	5	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	41	27	89	58	14	9	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	27	84	55	16	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	27	88	58	10	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	36	24	92	60	10	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	23	82	54	22	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	20	92	60	16	10	7	5
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)	35	23	86	56	13	8	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	23	99	64	11	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	27	73	48	16	10	10	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	25	76	50	19	12	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	40	26	84	55	14	9	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	33	79	52	11	7	3	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 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>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.



13 October 2009

Dear students

Inspection of Palatine Community Sports College, Blackpool, FY4 2AR

Many thanks to all of you for making the inspection team welcome in your school. We enjoyed hearing your views and seeing many of you at work in lessons. It is important that you know what we found out about your school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education and it is improving rapidly. The school provides you with good support and care, particularly those of you coping with difficult circumstances in your lives. Through strong partnerships with local organisations your school provides useful services both to yourselves and the local community. The good curriculum meets most of your many different needs and interests. You have a positive approach to staying healthy, which is seen in the good numbers who take part in sport regularly. Many of you make a good contribution to the local community, particularly through your work as student leaders in the school and of sport in local primary schools.

Your behaviour is satisfactory. Most of you are responding well to the 'Palatine Way'. You are responding well to better teaching. Consequently, the rate of learning in lessons is improving and the standards of attainment you reach are rising rapidly.

There is still room for improvement so we have asked your school to focus on:

- raising attainment across the school and accelerating the progress you make
- increasing the proportion of good and better lessons
- improving attendance
- improving the way the school checks on the effectiveness of its work.

You can play your part by ensuring that you make the most of what the school has to offer you by attending school regularly. You must be determined to do as well as you are able. We hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Palatine Community School and Sports' College and wish you well for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith
Lead inspector

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