

The Manor - A Foundation School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110872
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356826
Inspection dates	16-17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Andy Pellew
Headteacher	Mr Ben Slade (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 28 lessons, delivered by 27 teachers. They met students including the 'Student Voice' team, staff, governors and the National Challenge adviser. They observed the school's work, and looked at records of student attainment and attendance, lesson planning, school monitoring and evaluation evidence and received 80 questionnaires from parents and carers, 207 student questionnaires and 40 staff questionnaires.

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

- factors including prior attainment, teaching, classroom learning, and the curriculum, that explain why girls do even better than boys
- attendance, particularly of students from vulnerable circumstances
- reasons behind the strongly improving standards of literacy and numeracy
- strategies that might further improve teaching and learning.

Information about the school

The Manor became a foundation school on 1 September 2010, run by a new Trust (The North Cambridgeshire Community Trust) through a reconstituted board of governors. It is smaller than most secondary schools and the numbers on roll have risen 15% compared to 2009. There is a higher than average proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. Other indicators of economic development for the locality are lower than national averages. There is a higher than average proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs. A higher than average proportion of students joins the school part-way through a key stage. The school is a specialist performing arts college, re-designated in 2010, and holds the ArtsMark Gold award, Cambridgeshire Culture Award, Prince's Teaching Institute Kite Mark Award for English, and Cambridgeshire Chief Constable's Commendation for 'Students support of Police Officers'.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Manor delivers good quality education for each of its students, irrespective of their circumstance, background, or ability. It has improved substantially and securely since the previous inspection, primarily through a relentless focus on driving up standards in English and mathematics. The headteacher's excellent leadership, enthusiasm and steadfastness of purpose have brought about rapid improvements in leadership and management throughout the school. This outstanding capacity for improvement has already secured good quality teaching and learning and the resultant rate of improvement in student attainment is exceptional. They have now closed the gap to national expectations. Managers accurately evaluate provision, and respond quickly to shortfalls, particularly in teaching. External resources, brokered by the National Challenge adviser, have contributed well to the development of teaching and learning. Smaller teaching groups, one-to-one tuition for some students in English and mathematics, and a dedicated professional inclusion worker have made a substantial impact. This can be seen in strongly rising academic standards overall, and improving attendance, effectively ensuring good preparation for students in their future working lives. Students, staff, parents and carers have much to celebrate, with students proud and pleased of how much better school life has become. One parent typified the comments of many when writing, 'my child has improved so much in one year he is like a different child; so much happier.'

The school is a bright, well-maintained and well-equipped place to learn. The common feature of most lessons is brisk pace and challenge, coupled to good student behaviour and effort. Where learning is outstanding, teacher expertise and subject knowledge adds a sparkle and vibrancy to the learning ethos that captivates students' attention and fuels their natural inquisitiveness. The large majority of lessons seen by inspectors were good or better, with only minor weaknesses in the others. These were mainly missed opportunities for individual students to develop more independence through speaking or writing about their understanding of concept. Some more able learners would further benefit from tackling challenging tasks at an earlier stage in lessons. Most students enjoy school, and almost all say they feel safe.

Arrangements for keeping students healthy and safe are robust, with swift intervention from appropriate staff and other agencies when they detect risks to well-being. The school has started to review how it might better meet the needs of its local community, and the requirement for students to learn about life in modern multicultural Britain. The headteacher has catalysed the strategic development of

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Trust status, with new senior governors joining the governing body to help bring the vision of a rejuvenated school committed to transforming the local community for the better, beginning with high educational standards. The impact of the performing arts specialism is seen in the increasingly positive perception of the school by the local community, as the school works with other providers to deliver enjoyable music, drama and arts events in the locality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase opportunities for students to learn more, including from one another, about different faiths and cultures.
- Further enhance the opportunities for students to develop more independence in their learning, through activities in lessons that require all to contribute orally, or in writing.
- Use information on students' prior learning more consistently to ensure students start lessons with tasks that match and challenge their individual talents from the outset, particularly for the more able.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The average attainment of students when they start at The Manor has been well below that of most students nationally, for many years. Boys arrive with even lower standards than girls. Nevertheless, in 2009, almost all students made at least good progress to attain academic standards just below national figures. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well, obtaining higher standards than other similar students do nationally. The effective teamwork between teachers and classroom support staff is a strong feature of lesson delivery. In 2010, academic standards rose still further to be in line with the average for all other secondary schools. This represents good progress from a year group whose starting point was lower than their 2009 compatriots. A notable feature is the rising attainment in English language, and mathematics, that now ensures almost half the students (the same proportion as the national average) gain good GCSE grades in both these subjects as well as at least three others. Only three years ago, fewer than a quarter matched this standard.

Students achieve well. The reason for this securely good learning is rooted in the effectiveness of teaching, and the careful personalisation of the curriculum to meet individual learning needs. For example, a Year 11 student was very pleased to be part of the 'Step-up' programme that mixes off-site vocational experiences, with in-school tuition alongside conventional lessons. Students (and staff and parents) now realise they can do just as well as anyone else in the country. They are rightly proud of their school, lively and enthusiastic about day-to-day life in school, and keen for even more opportunities to participate in trips, extra-curricular activities and visits. Because lessons proceed so briskly, and with consistent reinforcement of behaviour

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expectations, there is little opportunity for disruption; indeed lessons are generally too enjoyable to risk missing out on by inattention. There remain infrequent instances where the full disciplinary sanctions of school are needed to deal with poor behaviour, but these are declining and are seen as being fairly applied by most students.

Attendance is slowly improving, and the very large majority of students attend well. There are some persistent absentees, but these are reducing in number. Students from Gypsy/Roma traveller backgrounds are welcomed by the school and well supported, thanks to the recent appointment of a school-based welfare worker. The school is a safe and vibrant learning community, and for some students is a haven of care and security in their otherwise challenging lives outside of school.

Participation in sporting and other extra-curricular activity is high, at over two thirds of students in a typical week. The school council, called 'student voice', is chosen by staff from written applications. It has a growing role in decisions about the school's social environment and is one strand by which governors hear of student views. Many students contribute to the life of the surrounding community, particularly through sporting links with primary schools, and public performances of music and drama for local residents. Students have well developed social and moral skills, demonstrated, for example by their welcome and support for recently arrived students into school. They all have adequate opportunities to systematically develop their spiritual and cultural understanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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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How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good information about student performance. Regular checks twice a term ensure that teachers, students, parents and carers can track progress over time, and take action to recover any shortfalls. Lesson plans provide for a range of abilities, although in general terms, rather than directed to named youngsters from the outset. In the best lessons, that bespoke match of challenge to student talent occurs because the teacher uses their own good awareness of each learner to suitably match task to student need and interest. Lessons start briskly, with students given a variety of activities, with short time limits to complete them. Some written work reveals gaps, because not everyone has managed to keep up. In other lessons, students have little time to reflect upon new concepts before a new task arrives, and occasionally this misses the opportunity for them to consolidate their understanding, or exercise some independence of thought. These are points that will help turn the existing good teaching to outstanding.

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs and interests of all learners, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or at an early stage of learning English, or with low literacy and numeracy standards when they entered the school. This is done by ensuring small teaching groups for such students, and one-to-one tuition, with teachers and support staff taking a personal interest and ownership for the success of these students. Although this excellent personal dedication comes without financial cost, the time and staffing to deliver it does use additional resources of money and personnel, most of which comes from the National Challenge. At Key Stage 4, students can access a very wide range of courses including four different Diplomas, other vocational pathways as well as conventional academic GCSEs. Year 11 students were very happy with their subject choices, and individuals spoke of their enjoyment of all kinds of different study pathways. The performing arts specialism is at the heart of extensive, supportive and enjoyable extra-curricular activities. But the school has correctly identified more that could be done to promote learning of different beliefs and cultures within multicultural Britain, starting with using the rich diversity of backgrounds already represented in the school.

The combination of good teaching and a personalised approach to the curriculum ensures the vast majority of students make good progress, irrespective of their learning needs. For some, these are minimal, but many students arrive at the school with low expectations of themselves. Once at The Manor, they stay, come to enjoy learning and eventually recover their full potential. The school is tenacious in its work to ensure no individual child is left behind. The good range of internal support staff, and effective links with external specialist agencies ensures students whose circumstances makes them vulnerable come to develop good emotional resilience, and this has a positive impact upon their learning. This dedication to inclusion regardless of background or previous history is the key strength of the school. It underpins the thinking of senior leaders, and is supported by the additional resources. Despite the good quality of care and support, a small minority of students

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are not attending regularly enough to benefit fully from this good quality educational provision.

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's excellent leadership, drive and strategic vision has, in the past two years, transformed overall management to being good. His determination to make The Manor the prime agent of social and economic improvement for its local community has begun to pay off, in rising academic standards and increasing ownership, via Trust status, of the strategy by local community leaders. Students are now achieving the expected levels of literacy and numeracy overall, with almost all students successful in moving from Year 11 into education, employment or training. This inclusive commitment to equality of opportunity for all local young people is demonstrated by the good progress of boys, girls, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with English as an additional language, and those from lower income families. The governing body has changed to reflect new community representation and support, and has good mechanisms to find out for itself what is happening in the school, including frequent visits to the school and its lessons by many governors. The school spends its resources well, ensuring additional funding earmarked to meet the needs of disadvantaged students is effectively used to close the attainment gap with the national average.

Systems to ensure the health and safety of pupils are robust. Students are taught well about personal safety, and understand the requirements of a healthy lifestyle. Staff training and understanding of child protection is good, with careful monitoring of records. The school provides good quality information to parents and carers about the progress of their children. The move to Trust status has included extensive and effective consultation with parents and carers, and the school has good contacts with Gypsy/Roma Traveller families that are helping to improve attendance and attainment of this group. The school has recently analysed the needs of its various communities, and has plans, not least being Trust status, to become the heartbeat of the locality. Those cohesion plans are new, with little as yet by way of evaluation of impact. The school recognises it has much to gain by helping students to understand better the rich range of cultures and beliefs that are already represented in the school.

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

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers agreed with all of the questions. A very few wrote of particular concerns in relation to meeting the needs of individual children, or difficulties in communications with the school. However, many more parents and carers wrote of their pleasure in the quality of education and home-school support that they had experienced, and several noted how much better the school had become in recent years. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection of any systematic shortcomings in the schools communications with parents, and endorse the views of the majority of parents and carers in confirming the improving effectiveness of school provision.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Manor 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 383 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	39	40	50	6	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	39	49	37	46	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	38	48	36	45	3	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	46	38	48	3	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	36	45	40	50	2	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	32	40	39	49	6	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	31	48	60	5	6	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)	31	39	40	50	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	43	38	48	3	4	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	41	34	43	7	9	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	30	42	53	5	6	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	40	50	34	43	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	59	26	33	3	4	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

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

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets 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.



20 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Manor – A Foundation School, Cambridge, CB4 2JF

Thank you for your polite and good-humoured welcome to my team of inspectors last week. We noted in particular how well you behaved in lessons and around the school in unstructured times like break. The Manor is a good school, and a lovely place to learn now, thanks to the excellent leadership of the headteacher, and the good work of his team of teachers and support staff. This means you are likely to make better progress than most students nationally, and therefore be able to access a full range of educational and training opportunities when you leave school. The school has many strengths, including its care and support for you as individuals, the flexible curriculum at Key Stage 4, and great teachers! We note your views of how well the school cares for you, your strong sense of loyalty to the school, and that the very large majority of you enjoy school life.

Because lessons are so brisk, and teachers provide a variety of activities to keep you busy, you learn well. To make even greater strides, we think that in some lessons, the main tasks, particularly the harder ones, could be started sooner by some of you, rather than all of you doing the same thing. There is also scope for you to have longer to develop your own ideas, and express them orally or in writing, from time to time. The school has plans to further enhance your understanding of different cultures and beliefs, and we think that because you are fortunate in having fellow students from a wide range of backgrounds, you are well placed to learn from each other.

Best wishes for every success in your future

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

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