

The Mosslands School: A Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105103
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377178
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Joan Davis HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,031
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne McArdle
Headteacher	Mark Rodaway
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
School address	Mosslands Drive Wallasey CH45 8PJ
Telephone number	0151 6388131
Fax number	0151 6391317
Email address	schooloffice@mosslands.wirral.sch.uk



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www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Joan Davis
Peter Mather
Derek Barnes
Tim Oakes

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons, taught by 35 teachers. In addition, inspectors listened to students reading, visited an assembly and observed the behaviour of students at break and during the lunch hour. Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the school's own monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching, information on current attainment and progress, in addition to minutes of meetings of the governing body. The inspection team also considered an analysis of 176 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Mosslands is a larger than average-sized school. It is a non-selective school working within a selective school system in the local area. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has specialist status for technology and has gained a number of awards, including Investors in People, the Healthy Schools Award and the International Award.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Mosslands is a satisfactory school. The school is inclusive and provides a warm and caring environment where all students are valued as individuals. Students speak highly of the school and parents and carers who returned questionnaires are, for the most part, positive about their child’s experience at Mosslands. Students enter the school with prior attainment that is broadly in line with the national average. They make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school and their attainment at the end of Year 11 is again in line with the national average. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school. The school’s provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective and as a result these students make good progress. Students appreciate the care they receive from their teachers and know that they are listened to when problems arise.
- The school is a cohesive community and most students behave well. Occasionally, there is a degree of low-level disruption in weakly taught lessons.
- The headteacher has clearly communicated to all members of the school community his drive, vision and ambition for the further development of the school. He is ably supported by an astute and knowledgeable governing body and senior leaders have an accurate grasp of the school’s strengths and weaknesses. As a result, outcomes for students have improved steadily since the headteacher’s appointment in 2007. However, teaching remains of variable quality and opportunities have been missed to share existing good practice and drive improvements in provision. Initiatives designed to do so have not been monitored with sufficient rigour and therefore their impact on practice has been negligible.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and ensure students make good progress by improving the quality of teaching to good or better, thereby reducing disruption to learning, by:
 - disseminating effectively existing good and outstanding practice so that all lessons are as good as the best
 - ensuring that lesson planning addresses the needs, abilities and interests of students
 - introducing more rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives designed to improve provision and ensure that these are implemented by leaders at all levels.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

There has been a rising trend in outcomes for students since the previous inspection. Although performance in some key measures dipped in 2010, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics in 2011 was the highest the school has ever achieved and attainment is now broadly in line with the national average. Students' attainment in science is significantly above the national average.

Students' progress is satisfactory overall. Most parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress at Mosslands. However, in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, inspectors found that students made only satisfactory progress. In addition, in the three years prior to this inspection, students did not make the progress expected of them in English. Furthermore, this had been identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Securing improvements in English has proved a challenge to the school. Owing to turbulence in staffing and difficulties in recruitment, the school has been dependent on a succession of temporary teachers. Another factor contributing to poor progress in English was that students were entered for examinations early and the grades they achieved were not as high as would have been expected, given their ability. The school has acted robustly to address these issues and students are now making the progress expected of them in this subject.

Students with special educational needs and students with disabilities make better progress than their peers. Students who enter the school with weaknesses in reading and writing are particularly well supported through outstanding teaching and excellent use of information and communication technology. For example, in one outstanding Year 7 English lesson observed during the inspection, students were highly engaged and enthusiastic. Through the expert direction of the teacher, students were using a wide range of strategies to enrich their writing, producing work that was refined, creative and of high quality. Students appreciate the 'buddy' system, in which sixth form students listen to younger students reading in order to

develop their literacy skills. Students known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to this group of students nationally.

The sixth form is highly inclusive. Students enter the sixth form with prior attainment that is, for the most part, well below the national average. They make satisfactory progress given their starting points, but attainment remains low. In the past, students have enrolled on courses that were not appropriate to their needs and abilities and as a result retention rates have been lower than the national average. The school has effectively addressed this by improving the curriculum, thereby providing more suitable progression routes for students lower down the school. Staff in the sixth form care well for students. They provide thoughtful guidance that is personalised to suit the needs of the individual student.

Quality of teaching

Although most parents and carers feel that their child is taught well at the school, inspectors found that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, leading to students making progress that is often no better than satisfactory. Too much variability exists and opportunities have been missed to share good practice.

In the best lessons, teachers bring the learning alive by designing a range of exciting activities that stimulate students' imagination and give them a thirst for knowledge. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 French lesson observed during the inspection, students rose to the challenge to find the answer to a puzzle set by the teacher. They used the foreign language confidently, worked well collaboratively and there was a palpable sense of thrill and enjoyment in the classroom. The best lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and a clear sense of purpose. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and ensure that students understand the relevance of what they are studying by providing a context for their learning, encouraging students to reflect upon issues in the real world, beyond the school gates. In this way, the best teaching supports students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

However, this good practice is not consistent across the school and sometimes too much talk from the teacher leads to dull, pedestrian delivery that does not sufficiently engage the learners. In the weakest lessons, students express their dissatisfaction by engaging in low-level disruption which prevents the teacher from teaching and other students from learning.

In some lessons, teachers use assessment information effectively to plan lessons that incorporate activities to suit the needs and abilities of all learners, thereby ensuring that all students make good or better progress. However, again this good practice is not consistent across the school. Too frequently, activities are insufficiently challenging and do not stretch the students.

The quality of marking of students' work is highly variable. Good practice exists, for example in art and music. However, in some areas of the curriculum, marking is cursory and students do not always receive clear advice on how to improve their work. For the most part, students are aware of their targets but are sometimes unsure as to what they need to do to achieve them. The school has suitable policies

to improve literacy skills across the curriculum, but practice in this respect is inconsistent both in and between departments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students say that they feel safe in the school and a large majority of parents and carers echo this point of view. Students state that there is very little bullying and that when it occurs it is dealt with effectively. Students are polite, welcoming and friendly and movement around the school is orderly. Students mix well together socially at break times and in the lunch hour. They understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it. Attendance is slightly above the national average. Students generally arrive punctually at school but on several occasions during the inspection, students disturbed lessons by arriving late. Racist incidents are rare and dealt with effectively.

Behaviour is improving strongly but remains an area of concern for some parents, carers, students and staff. The school's exclusion rate has been much higher than the national average in the past and low-level disruption was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. The school has provided extensive training for staff to improve the effectiveness of strategies designed to manage behaviour. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen dramatically. Most students behave well in lessons. However, the behaviour of students remains poor where teaching is weaker. For example, in one lesson observed during the inspection, students talked and giggled as the teacher tried to explain the work and, as a result, students made little progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has been successful in driving improvements in many areas of the school's work, for example in achievement and behaviour. Performance management has been used effectively and underperformance has been tackled robustly. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. However, improvement planning lacks precision, clear success criteria and lines of accountability. The school has put in place extensive training in order to improve the quality of teaching and has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in this area of provision. However, systems for monitoring the impact of initiatives have lacked rigour; therefore improvements have been slow to take effect and practice is inconsistent. The school has made some progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection; therefore the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The school works highly effectively with a range of partners and as a result the number of students who leave the school and do not go on to further education, training or employment is well below the national average. This is particularly impressive given that the school is located in an area that is economically disadvantaged.

The curriculum is good overall because it is highly personalised and has had a positive impact on behaviour, motivation and achievement. It is broad and balanced, meets all statutory requirements and developments in the post-16 curriculum are now ensuring that all students can choose courses to suit their needs, interests and

abilities. Students receive clear advice as to what courses they may choose as they move up through the school. Students can elect to study the English Baccalaureate, separate sciences and a wide range of other subjects. Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school. Students receive guidance on what clubs to join to suit their interests, improve their skills or heighten their self-esteem. There is a wide range of opportunities to visit places of cultural interest, such as the Liverpool World Museum.

The governing body benefits from an astute Chair who has a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of education. The governing body are effective in holding the school to account and have the courage to challenge senior leaders in order to secure improvements in outcomes for students. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders, in conjunction with the governing body, promote equality satisfactorily and tackle discrimination effectively.

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Students work well together and show consideration for others less fortunate than themselves by raising substantial amounts for charity. The sixth form plays an active role in the school and the wider community, mentoring younger students, helping in departments and working with local primary schools. Students have the opportunity to reflect on ethical issues through the curriculum and through visits, such as the annual tour to the battlefields of Normandy organised by the history department. There are many opportunities to take part in cultural activities, such as the 'Battle of the Bands' music event and the performing arts production that takes place every two years in conjunction with a local girls' school. The life of the school is greatly enriched and enlivened by Petal, a guide dog, currently being trained at the school as part of the school's work for the charity 'Guide Dogs for the Blind'.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



13 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Mosslands School: A Technology College, Wallasey, CH45 8PJ

We would like to thank you all for the friendly welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by the good attitudes you show towards each other. Most of you behave well in lessons and most of you enjoy coming to school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. You make an excellent contribution to charities to help people less fortunate than yourselves. You make satisfactory progress as you move up through the school. Your attainment at the end of Year 11 is in line with the national average but at the end of Year 13, although progress is satisfactory, attainment is lower than the national average. Your school has plans in place to address this.

Teaching is satisfactory in your school overall. We noticed that you enjoy lessons that challenge and stimulate you. You work hard in these lessons. However, behaviour is less good when the activities that the teacher has planned do not interest you. You appreciate the support you receive from your teachers and you know who to turn to if you have a problem. Your attendance is better than the national average, but some of you do not always arrive on time to your lessons.

We have identified a number of areas where we think your school should make improvements. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that good teachers share their expertise with others so that all lessons are as good as the best, with varied and exciting activities that help you to learn. In our judgement, if the school takes these actions then behaviour will improve and so will your examination results.

All of you can help in the further improvement of your school by continuing to attend school regularly and working hard, taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to you. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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