

Marple Hall School - A Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106138
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	377361
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Sally Kenyon 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shan Alexander
Headteacher	Rose Hegan
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
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Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed a total of 51 teachers in 52 lessons, completed four learning walks, and held meetings with staff, groups of students, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the three responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, scrutinised students' books, looked at a broad range of documentation provided by the school and took into account the responses from 206 parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

Marple Hall School is a larger than average specialist language college. The proportions of students known to be eligible for free school meals and from minority ethnic groups are both well below national averages. The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is also below average. Due to the closure of another local secondary school, Marple Hall's roll has increased and nearly 200 students have joined the school over the past two years, many at times other than the start of the school year and into a variety of year groups. The current headteacher took up post in September 2010. The Chair of the Governing Body is new in post. A reorganisation of leadership across the school over the past year has resulted in many new appointments including a special educational needs coordinator, leaders of Key Stage 3 and 4, a personal, social, health and citizenship education coordinator, a literacy leader and senior leader for teaching and learning. The school currently meets the government's floor standards.

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

- This is a satisfactory school where the majority of students make satisfactory progress.
- Since the previous inspection there have been notable improvements not least in the achievements of the most-able students some of whom now make good progress.
- Progress is slower at Key Stage 3 and weaker in English, for middle- and lower-ability students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory; however, there are many good and outstanding examples of teaching within the school. This is as a result of concerted efforts to raise the quality of teaching and improve progress.
- Arrangements for assessment have improved but there are still significant inconsistencies in the quality of feedback students receive about how to improve their work both orally and through marking.
- The headteacher’s vision for distributing leadership responsibilities across the school is bearing fruit and the impact of improvements can be seen, for example in a reduction in the amount of inadequate teaching.
- Policies are in place for marking and behaviour but are not consistently applied by all staff.
- Members of the governing body are passionately committed to improving the school yet opportunities are missed to involve them more directly in self-evaluation.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. Inspectors observed a great variety of behaviours throughout the school. Many students are polite, well mannered and respectful. However, a minority of students do not behave well at breaks and lunchtimes and some low-level disruption occurs in lessons.
- The management of behaviour is variable. Some staff plan engaging, independent learning to meet individual needs and, consequently, students behave well. However,

where lessons are less stimulating or are inaccessible for some groups, engagement wanes resulting in poor behaviour which is not always effectively dealt with.

- Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education is being developed under new leadership and while some good examples of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education were seen, many opportunities, for example during morning registration, were missed.

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?

- Accelerate progress especially at Key Stage 3, in English and for middle- and lower-ability students by:
 - sharing good and outstanding practice in the provision of independent and engaging learning supported by peer- and self-assessment
 - ensuring that students receive regular, high-quality feedback about how to improve their work both orally and through marking.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - ensuring that all teaching provides suitable challenge, engagement and support to enable all groups to make good progress
 - embedding a consistent approach to behaviour management in all lessons around the school
 - creating further opportunities to develop social, moral, spiritual and cultural education including through PSHE and citizenship education.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring, evaluation and review by:
 - checking formally and more regularly at all levels of leadership that policies and recommendations are followed by all staff
 - increasing the role of the governing body in self-evaluation.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with above average attainment. They leave with attainment that is above average and steadily rising over time. The proportion of students leaving with five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been significantly above the national average for the past three years and is set to rise again in 2012. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the survey feel that their child is making good progress at school and for some groups this is the case. Last year saw a stepped increase in the achievements of the most-able students with a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining grades A and A* across a range of subjects.

However, middle-ability boys did not make expected progress in 2011 but through the school's swift intervention, this year's cohort now form the 'FIFA' group of middle-ability

boys and are on- track to make at least satisfactory progress. The school is using a variety of interventions through mentoring, literacy and numeracy and involving parents and carers to ensure that progress for all groups is improved. Progress seen in lessons is satisfactory. Students were observed making good or outstanding progress across a range of subjects where teaching allows. However, progress is weaker at Key Stage 3 and in English. Although some inadequate progress by disabled students and those with special educational needs was observed, some good support and hence progress was also evident. This group is now being rigorously tracked and is making satisfactory progress overall.

Quality of teaching

The very large majority of parents and students who responded to the survey feel that teaching is good at this school. Inspectors found that the majority of lessons observed were good with a few outstanding but too much satisfactory teaching remains. Three examples of outstanding teaching were seen in mathematics and they were characterised by a fast pace, high-engagement, expert subject knowledge and very detailed planning to challenge and support individual learning needs. Moreover, outstanding practice was observed in a highly technical Year 11 drama lesson, here, students' learning was supported by clear assessment criteria linked to individual abilities allowing high-quality collaborative learning. Similarly, music lesson students acted as critical friends as they diligently assessed each other's work. They all had a very clear idea of the assessment criteria and well planned, challenging work allowed them to create high level responses. Some excellent examples of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education were seen not least in the two lessons referenced above; however, opportunities to promote it were missed in many lessons.

In contrast, a very few inadequate lessons were seen where some groups of students were unable to make satisfactory progress because learning was insufficiently adapted to suit their needs. Where teaching remains satisfactory there is a lack of pace, challenge and support for learning, so that some groups of students are unable to make better than satisfactory progress. Sometimes this has a negative impact on behaviour as students become disengaged from their learning. Some parents and carers commented on inconsistencies in the quality and regularity of marking in books. Inspectors found great variation across the school. Students reported that they very much appreciate regular and detailed feedback about how to improve their work so that they can take ownership of their learning and make better progress. The school recognises the need to have a more robust approach to literacy across the curriculum not least to ensure that all students can independently access their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The large majority of behaviour seen in lessons was good; however, behaviour around the school and over time paints a less favourable picture. The majority of students who responded to the survey feel that behaviour is good in their school and in lessons. However, inspectors spoke to a broader sample of students both through meetings and around the school site. Some of them raised concerns about the standard of behaviour in a minority of lessons. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the survey feel that behaviour is good at school and the majority feel that lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour. However, concerns were raised by parents about behaviour in some lessons and the poor management of behaviour from time to time.

Exclusion rates are below national averages but distinctly higher for some groups, for example disabled students and those with special educational needs. While referrals to the internal exclusion room (IER) have increased, this is as a result of the school raising expectations for behaviour. The number of isolations (immediate removal from lessons) has decreased as the quality of teaching improves and the school leadership encourages behavioural issues to be tackled primarily at departmental level. Students have some awareness of the different types of bullying that take place; however, opportunities for them to explore subjects like this more fully are often missed. Attendance is above average; persistent absence has reduced considerably and it is well below national averages. Most students who responded to the survey say that they feel safe in school.

Leadership and management

Through well executed plans, the headteacher and her team have improved the quality of teaching and achievement since the previous inspection. Very few examples of inadequate teaching remain. The school has an accurate view of the overall quality of teaching and is focusing upon moving a cohort of satisfactory teaching to good. The leadership and management of teaching are effective yet reaching a benchmark of consistently good teaching remains an ongoing focus. The school is effectively sharing good and outstanding practice through the teaching and learning communities, which are cross-curricular groups of staff who meet regularly, and lead teachers. Curriculum reviews effectively highlight strengths and weaknesses within departments but opportunities are missed to follow up the recommendations to ensure they have been carried out. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and are acutely aware of what still needs to be done. There are many examples of the governing body supporting the school and equally holding them to account. However, opportunities are missed to exploit the expertise of the governing body to maximise school improvement.

The very large majority of staff who responded to the survey feel that the school is well managed and led. Expectations and aspirations have been raised and the impact of improvements clearly seen. Where the school has focused its efforts, for example on reducing persistent absence or increasing the proportion of GCSE grades A and A*, there is a definite and measurable impact showing clear capacity for further improvement. The school has continued to make improvements while increasing numbers of students have joined the school at times other than the normal points of entry. Leaders and managers are very aware of the importance of building strong relationships across the school to ensure that everyone feels a part of the same community. While some good examples of this were seen, for example in the lunchtime samba band, there is some way to go before social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is a strong feature of the school.

The curriculum is under constant review and presents considerable challenges for the school. It is satisfactory, however, staff reported that students missing lessons in order to take vocational qualifications off-site has a detrimental impact on their progress in some subjects. The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding and promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination satisfactorily.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Marple Hall School - A Specialist Language College,
Stockport, SK6 6LB**

Please accept my sincere thanks for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We listened carefully to what you said and your comments really helped us to reach judgements. Thank you also for the time you spent completing questionnaires and for talking to inspectors in meetings and around the school.

- We found that you go to a satisfactory school. While some of the teaching is good and outstanding, too much remains satisfactory.
- While many of you are very polite, respectful and well behaved, a minority of students do not always behave well and on occasion this disrupts your learning.
- You make the best progress when teachers plan exciting, fast paced learning to suit the needs and abilities of all students and allow you to assess your own and each other's work against clear assessment criteria.
- You make less progress when teaching is not planned to meet your individual needs, it does not capture your interest and the pace of learning is too slow.
- We have asked your school to ensure that all of you make better progress, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in English by improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that you get good quality feedback in lessons and in your books so you all understand how you can improve your work.
- We have asked the school to ensure that behaviour improves by checking that teachers' planning supports your needs and provides suitable challenge for you to make good progress.
- We have also asked the school's leaders to ensure that when poor behaviour does occur, it is dealt with consistently in line with the school's policies and to create further opportunities to develop your social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.
- We would like members of your governing body to become more involved in checking how well the school is doing.
- You can play a big part in improving your school by behaving well and treating others with respect, trying to make the best possible progress in your work and asking for help when you are unsure.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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