

Montgomery High School - A Language College and Full Service School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119735
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	379880
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2011
Reporting 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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gail Neale
Headteacher	Simon Brennand
Date of previous school inspection	08 October 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 49 staff in 51 lessons. They held meetings with students, staff, members of the governing body, partners such as the University of Cumbria, and the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at evidence from 318 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of all students, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more able.
- The quality of teaching, particularly in modern foreign languages and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of the use of assessment information to support learning to allow the more able to make good progress.
- The capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to bring about and sustain improvements.

Information about the school

Montgomery High School is a much larger than average size secondary school. It is a specialist language college and extended school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school became a Trust school in 2008 and appointed a new headteacher in September 2010. The school holds the International School Award, the Healthy School status, the Diana Anti-bullying Award. It has most recently gained the Tribal Award for Excellence and Improvement in English.

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

2

Main findings

Montgomery High School is a good school. Many students wear the 'I love Monty' badge, indicating the strength of pride in their school. One parent commented: 'I am very pleased with the progress my child has made since she has started High School. She feels safe and happy at school. I would recommend Montgomery to other families.'

Achievement is good. Since the last inspection the school's focus on achieving more A and A* grades at GCSE has seen some clear gains, for example, in English language, chemistry, biology and physics. However, the school realises that there are still missed opportunities to challenge thoroughly the most able across all lessons. Progress has improved at Key Stage 3 with a significant increase in the proportion of students making two levels progress in English and science, and a steady upward trend in mathematics.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection due to the concerted efforts of staff to share good practice through groups such as 'teaching and learning capacity' (TLC). A strong focus on developing assessment to support learning means that most students know the levels they are working at and what are their targets. Some good examples of peer- and self-assessment were seen, and inspectors observed the creative use of traffic-light pages in planners to indicate pupils' levels of understanding. The best progress is made in lessons where students are able to work independently with high challenge and a good pace. However, progress slows when lessons are too teacher-led and student engagement wanes.

Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what still needs to be improved. The commitment of staff to raising attainment is shown by all staff who responded to the questionnaire, agreeing that they know what the school is trying to achieve and that they are actively involved in it. A perceptive 'single plan' for the school has already paid dividends in the shape of improved teaching and learning and a clear identification, analysis and monitoring of the 'on call' system, which has resulted in a reduction of behaviour incidents. While behaviour is good overall, inspectors saw satisfactory behaviour in a small minority of lessons. This was due to the level of challenge or support for learning being poorly matched to students' needs for the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Middle and senior leader training courses have had a positive impact and empowered more staff to increase the depth of monitoring, evaluation and review. Transparent systems are now in place for whole-school self-evaluation and middle leaders undertake a range of monitoring activities which are presented to senior leaders at the monthly 'School Improvement Board.' This has resulted in an extended leadership team taking much more responsibility for holding staff to account for students' outcomes and showing good capacity for further improvement.

The governing body has undergone many changes since the last inspection and has responded well to the recommendations in the report. The governing body has a heartfelt commitment to helping the school achieve its aims and the school intends to further exploit its expertise through a greater direct involvement in self-evaluation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate progress by:
 - creating more opportunities for challenging, engaging and independent learning, particularly for the most able students
 - ensuring consistent use of specific learning strategies to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - involving the governing body more directly in the school's self-evaluation processes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment. They make good progress from their starting points and leave with above average attainment. Progress seen in lessons was stronger in the core subjects as a result of the school's drive to improving the use of assessment to support learning which has focussed on these subjects and is now being spread across the school. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers.

Achievement in modern foreign languages remains variable at Key Stage 4 but has shown steady improvement at Key Stage 3. Some good progress was seen in lessons; for example, a Year 9 German lesson's consistent use of the target language, coupled with clear assessment objectives, meant that all students made good progress in speaking and listening skills. This year's results have significantly improved in French, which sees the highest levels of entry in languages across the school. The languages department now hosts the 'hub' for the local education authority to allow all local schools to share good teaching practice in these subjects.

Almost all students who responded to the survey reported that they felt safe in school and would have a number of adults they could turn to if there was a problem. Many staff are trained to deal with cyber-bullying and the school recently received an award for its anti-bullying work. The large majority of behaviour seen in lessons is good or better, as a result of effective behaviour management and use of 'Monty Point' rewards.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Students comment very positively on the wealth of overseas trips that take place and the links with other countries. A Montgomery High School student is currently the north Blackpool youth member of parliament, ensuring that young people’s voices are heard by decision makers in the area.

Attendance is above average. The school has made significant gains in reducing persistent absence over the last three years and is monitoring the attendance of groups closely. A Lead Behaviour and Inclusion Manager has been appointed to ensure that work in this area continues to have a positive impact and further improve outcomes.

Students adopt healthy lifestyles well. The school council has introduced an outdoor seating area alongside the restaurant; however, limited indoor space results in some students having to wait for long periods of time at break and lunchtime.

Students make good contributions to the school and wider community. Last year they held a ‘Tangerine Day’ in aid of the stroke association. This not only raised money but allowed the local community to come into school and have various health checks, such as a blood pressure test.

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	2
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]/[skills] that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching overall is good. In the best lessons, students make good or better progress because objectives are clear and intended outcomes are structured for students with different levels of ability. This was evident in a Year 9 history class where students worked independently on an analysis of ‘Who should be king in 1066?’ The lesson was engaging and challenging; good progress was made by all students as a result of clear learning objectives and peer-assessment linked to tiered outcomes. In an outstanding science lesson, good pace and a well-planned variety of engaging activities meant that all students made accelerated progress. The teacher

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

used a more stretching set of questions to extend the thinking of the most able, and students were able to articulate what they had done well and what they needed to improve.

The curriculum is good. An ongoing curriculum review has already made significant changes in modern foreign languages and science. The languages department has introduced two new courses to allow students with weaker literacy skills to make better progress, and some of the most able in Year 7 have completed their first qualification in Mandarin in association with a local university. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been greatly enhanced since the last inspection and many students regularly use interactive whiteboards to promote independent learning, although this remains inconsistent across the school. A literacy leader has been appointed and will serve to enhance cross-curricular provision.

On Wednesday afternoons, many varied activities occur in place of a traditional lesson arrangement. These include: zumba, digital photography, baseball and gardening. The school is closely monitoring the uptake of activities to ensure that the engagement of Key Stage 4 students matches that of those in Key Stage 3.

The pastoral team has been re-modelled in the past year to focus on making students 'ready to learn'. Previous heads of year are now progress managers with the emphasis not only on supporting the 'whole student', but also on tracking individual progress and seeking to provide tailored support for the 'whole child'. Support for families is offered in partnership with the local health service and youth team. The overwhelming majority of students who responded to the survey commented that they receive good guidance for their future lives and the vast majority of students continue into education, employment or training when they leave school.

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 is tenacious in distributing leadership and developing the capacity of leaders and managers. Rigorous systems for monitoring, tracking and analysing progress are in place along with a clear self-evaluation cycle. Leaders embed ambition and drive improvement well through the school's mission statement of 'mutual respect, ambition and learning.' The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good, with senior and middle leaders conducting formal observations and 'learning walks' around the school.

The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well. There are very few racist incidents and, if any occur, they are thoroughly investigated and

reported. Arrangements for safeguarding and community cohesion are good. Engagement with parents and carers is good and the school has launched a new website for parents and carers as a result of feedback from the parent council.

Since the advent of Trust status, the governing body has welcomed new members including local businesses, the Blackpool Sixth Form and Further Education Colleges. Members of the governing body are now linked to each curriculum area, although this is in its infancy. The governing body is involved with students through joining the school council for have lunch and helping out in careers events by interviewing Key Stage 4 students. The governing body readily challenges the school and acts as a critical friend; however, it is not fully and systematically involved in whole-school self-evaluation.

Montgomery extended school provides help and support for teenage mothers, advice on sexual health matters and counselling. It also offers family support services and many of these are accessed by parents and carers of students at the school. There are strong partnerships through the Trust, for example, with the local sixth form college and also with the fire service, the army, a local football club and a construction company.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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	2
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 who responded to the survey felt that their child enjoyed school and most felt that their child was safe in school. Most think that the school is well led and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. A few negative comments were received about the reporting system, behaviour and bullying. Inspectors followed these up with the school but found that most parents and carers feel that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. Comments about bullying and behaviour were followed up with the school and inspectors found that while there were some isolated incidents of poor behaviour, the management of behaviour was good and staff and students reported that it had improved in recent years.

Some parents and carers commented about the school not providing enough challenge for more able students and not having enough understanding of specific special educational needs in order to effectively support students' learning. Through lesson observations and meetings with staff and students, inspectors found that whilst there was some good and better practice, support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the degree of challenge for the most able were inconsistent across the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Montgomery High School - A Language College and Full Service 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 318 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,450 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	117	37	173	54	17	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	136	43	167	53	4	1	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	92	29	198	62	16	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	103	32	189	59	9	3	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	110	35	187	59	7	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	24	205	64	18	6	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	19	197	62	40	13	4	1
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)	103	32	188	59	11	3	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	104	33	183	58	16	5	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	91	29	181	57	23	7	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	20	196	62	25	8	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	113	36	174	55	12	4	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	138	43	154	48	12	4	4	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



3 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Montgomery High School - A Language College and Full Service School, Blackpool, FY2 0AZ

Thank you for being so welcoming to the inspection team when we visited your school earlier this month. Thank you also for the time you spent telling us about your school, telling us about your learning in lessons, and for completing questionnaires. We listened carefully to what you said and your contribution helped us reach our judgements.

To summarise, we found that:

- you go to a good school
- you achieve good outcomes
- teaching is good overall, however there is still some variation in quality across the school in meeting everyone's needs
- your behaviour is good, as is the care, guidance and support you receive
- you have a strong community ethos and make lots of effort to help others.

The inspection team have asked the school to accelerate progress further by allowing all of you to have more lessons offering engaging, challenging and independent learning. We also want the school to ensure that all teachers use specific learning strategies to help those of you who need specific support with learning to make good and better progress. Finally, we have asked your highly committed governing body to become more involved in helping the school evaluate its own work.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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