

Malmesbury School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137308
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	397470
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Rundle HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,273
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Gray
Headteacher	Tim Gilson
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
School address	Corn Gastons Malmesbury SN16 0DF
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Rundle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Barnard	Additional inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional inspector
Sally Hall	Additional inspector
Barry King	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out at short notice. Inspectors observed 28 teachers teaching 28 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders, and paid short visits to a further 25 lessons. In addition, the inspection team made visits to a year assembly and tutorial sessions. Meetings were held with five groups of students, representatives of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and evaluation records and improvement plan, safeguarding policies and a sample of teachers' assessments and planning. Inspectors analysed 166 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Malmesbury is a larger than average-sized school serving a rural community in the town of Malmesbury and its surrounding villages. It has specialist subjects in science and performing arts, mathematics and computing. It became a new-style academy converter in August 2011. It has recently set up alternative provision for permanently excluded students. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students supported through school action is average with the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs being well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The acting headteacher at the previous inspection was appointed as the permanent headteacher. The school holds a large number of quality marks.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is very ably supported by a team of highly effective senior and middle managers. Students, parents, carers and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its work. One parental comment summarises what many others say, 'This is a wonderful school. It nurtures, cares and educates the children.'
- The sixth form is outstanding. Attainment is significantly above average and students make outstanding progress. New courses have been introduced that match the aspirations of more students so the sixth form is expanding quickly.
- Achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 has been significantly above average in recent years with a strongly rising trend. Students' progress, from above average standards on entry, is impressive as they gain new skills and knowledge rapidly.
- Teaching is outstanding overall because the quality is always good with a high proportion being outstanding. Best practice exists in all aspects of teaching, although minor inconsistencies occur in the quality of written and verbal feedback to ensure all students know specifically how to improve at all times.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding in lessons and around the school. They display highly positive attitudes to school, their learning and each other. They enjoy school, they want to be there and they want to learn.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders have created a highly ambitious ethos, with a strong culture of personal development for staff and students. All rise to the challenge admirably. Secure procedures are in place to monitor the school's work and identify best practice. This information is not always utilised fully to eliminate small inconsistencies and help make all teaching and learning outstanding. The curriculum and provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding and continue to improve further. Governors make a strong contribution to the school.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help teachers to make all teaching and learning outstanding by sharing the school's best practice more fully and monitoring its impact so that inconsistencies are eliminated and all students know specifically how to improve further.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment is consistently significantly above average because of the quality of teaching and ambitious students. Robust actions have been taken where subjects have been below or in line with average in the past with significant positive impact. For example, work seen in technology and modern foreign language lessons, and assessments in the school's own tracking data, indicate that students are now working well above average. Progress that students make during their time at the school is rapid and sustained, leading to high levels of qualifications, confidence and self-esteem. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make the same outstanding progress as others in the school from their starting points because of the high quality of support and work that is planned carefully to meet their needs. It is too soon to see the impact of the alternative provision on student progress over time. Previous achievement in the sixth form showed some variation between AS and A level with students in Year 12 performing slightly better than those in Year 13. However, this variation has been eliminated quickly, achievement is now significantly above average for both age groups and is particularly high in the number of students gaining the higher A*–A grades. Robust assessment procedures ensure that any students identified as underachieving have swift intervention with individually tailored programmes that enable them to 'catch up' quickly and to make progress in line with their capability. Almost all parents and carers, and all students, recognise the good progress being made. This is summed up by one who says, 'My child has made very good progress in all subjects; they are encouraged and continually pushed forward to reach higher goals.'

As a result of focused work across the school, students are highly competent at using their literacy and communication skills in a variety of subjects and situations, although not all students take enough pride in the presentation of their work in books. The quality of debate and challenge between students, and between staff and students, is remarkable, including when exploring moral issues such as prison reform. This leads to students of all ages using high-level thinking skills to form ideas and to work out creative solutions to tasks. Students read with confidence, including in front of their peers, as seen in a house assembly and most lessons. Leaders are now successfully transferring the focus to the use of numeracy skills across the curriculum. Some good examples of this were seen in science lessons where students were able to explain complex equations to each other to strengthen their own understanding.

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Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is remarkably high because of high expectations of leaders and teachers of themselves. Robust action is taken if any lessons which are only satisfactory are observed. Teachers are highly effective at meeting the needs of all students and promoting outstanding progress. In one lesson, students with special educational needs were encouraged to make eye contact with each other while speaking and listening to support progress in both their academic and social skills. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and innovative in their approaches, leading to lessons that motivate and actively engage students in their learning. Teachers have high expectations of students, particularly in using the correct technical terminology and vocabulary of the subject. In the best lessons, teachers act as facilitators so that all students, including those with lower ability and students supported through school action or with a statement of special educational needs, work independently or collaboratively and take responsibility for their own learning. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

Outstanding opportunities are provided for students to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally through carefully selected topics that promote robust discussions, for example on the impact of acid rain. Although most students are given opportunities to engage in peer coaching and assessments, inconsistencies exist in its effective use across the school. Relationships are excellent and high levels of respect are apparent between students and staff. As a result, students are confident to ask questions, respond to teachers' questions and express their views in a safe environment. Teaching assistants offer outstanding support to staff and students. In most lessons, students know their targets, and written and verbal assessment and feedback is highly effective. However, minor variations exist in how targets are used and the frequency and quality of marking, and the sharing of best practice is not fully consolidated to ensure all teaching and learning is outstanding. Most parents, carers and students are extremely positive about the quality of teaching in the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students display high levels of respect, politeness and concentration in lessons that contributes significantly to their own and others' learning. Inspectors found that students have very positive attitudes to school and their learning and they persevere to improve their work. A small number of parents and carers who returned questionnaires, expressed concerns about lessons being disrupted by bad behaviour and the school's effectiveness in dealing with bullying. However inspectors found behaviour to be outstanding and all students spoken to say this excellent behaviour is typical at all times. The recent parent and student external surveys, with high returns, and behaviour records verify this positive position and indicate high levels of satisfaction on behaviour and safety. Students are adamant that bullying is just not tolerated in the school, incidences are very rare and the school has secure procedures to deal with this. Exclusion rates are extremely low and the school has initiated effective provision for the very rare occurrence of permanent student exclusion.

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Attendance is significantly above average and rising. Impressively, all students say they feel very safe in school, and all parents and carers agree, reflecting the school's excellent work in keeping students safe. An effective programme of personal, social and health education, and units in a range of other subjects, ensure a good focus on personal safety, drug and alcohol awareness, and refusal skills. The student voice is increasing with the reinstatement of the school and sixth form councils and student representatives on working groups. Sixth form students welcome the recent opportunities to act as ambassadors for the school through becoming mentors, leading activities, and observing and feeding back on provision.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and other senior leaders demonstrate ambition and determination and have created a school with high expectations and a shared vision of excellence. They take a long-term view of building capacity with high levels of devolved responsibility that has effectively built strength and depth in leadership. Their success is seen in high staff morale, sustained improvements in students' outcomes, improving behaviour and reduced number of exclusions, and increased quality of teaching. Leaders very effectively use progress data and monitoring information to identify strengths and weaknesses, and take robust, swift and effective action to resolve any emerging issues. Opportunities for professional development and sharing of best practice are numerous. Staff are enthusiastic about using the compendium of good practice and the buddy system that enables them to utilise and share their expertise. A strong culture of improvement permeates throughout the school. However, at times, leaders miss opportunities to share best practice fully and monitor its impact to eliminate minor inconsistencies.

The governing body works in close alliance with leaders in an open and transparent manner. They have a positive impact on the school's work and are robust in holding leaders to account. They provided excellent support during the transition to becoming an academy and have in-depth understanding of how to sustain improvements. Secure procedures are in place to ensure the safeguarding of staff and students. Leaders and governors are tenacious in promoting the equality of students and tackling discrimination through the expanding curriculum opportunities, a highly inclusive ethos, and numerous opportunities to explore and celebrate students' similarities and differences.

Leaders have chosen to provide a highly focused academic curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of students. It is outstanding because it provides a rich and varied diet of activities, including excellent provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, teaching methods and memorable experiences in lessons, and through enrichment opportunities. It results in outstanding outcomes that are improving further and retention rates increasing between Years 12 and 13. Leaders have initiated alternative provision for permanently excluded students with individual programmes to match their needs.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



11 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Malmesbury School, Malmesbury SN16 0DF

Thank you for your help and for talking to us during the recent inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and seeing your work. I am writing to tell you about our findings.

Your school provides you with an outstanding education. All of you achieve significantly above average standards and make rapid progress in your learning during your time at the school. This is because you benefit from outstanding teaching. The headteacher, head of sixth form and other leaders provide a strong lead and have created a highly ambitious ethos, with a strong culture of personal development for both staff and students. You rise to the challenge admirably. You are very positive about the school and its work. All of you say that you feel safe in school. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors found behaviour is typically outstanding, that bullying is not tolerated and incidents are rare and dealt with effectively.

We have asked the school to help teachers make all teaching and learning outstanding by sharing the school's best practice more fully and monitoring its impact so that inconsistencies are eliminated and all of you know specifically how to improve further.

We encourage you to listen and respond positively to teachers' comments and hope that you continue to enjoy school and sustain the high standards that you reach.

We wish you well in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector

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