

Meole Brace School Science College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123573
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	380691
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	Gwendoline Coates 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	1050
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Smith
Headteacher	Hilary Burke
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
School address	Longden Road Shrewsbury SY3 9DW
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

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This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Parts of 37 lessons were observed and a similar number of teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan. They took account of the 263 responses received from the parent and carer questionnaire and responses from the student and staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

Meole Brace School is a broadly average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language is well below the national average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below the national average.

The school is a member of the Shrewsbury Partnership for Education and Training and has gained the following awards: Eco-Schools Bronze Flag; Healthy Schools Award; Sportsmark Silver; Safer Schools Accreditation; Educational Business Partnership Award for work experience.

The school exceeds the current floor standards set by the government, which determine the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Good teaching ensures that students’ achievement is good and that their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills are well developed.
- Students’ behaviour and their safety are outstanding. Their behaviour reflects the strong emphasis on mutual respect that is so evident in all aspects of the life of the school and ensures they have excellent attitudes to learning. Parents were unanimous in their view that their children are kept safe at school. The parent of a Year 7 student echoed the sentiments of most when noting, ‘I know my child will be safe and happy when I drop her at the school gates.’ Another said in relation to safety, ‘I feel at ease when my child is at school.’
- The school is not yet outstanding because some teaching is still satisfactory and not all teaching ensures that all students are able to make good progress. In particular: not all teaching is closely matched to individual students’ needs and abilities or actively involves them during lessons; not all teachers challenge students sufficiently when questioning them; not all feedback on students’ work is of the same high quality; and expectations of how students should respond to teachers’ feedback comments are unclear.
- The headteacher’s high expectations about the opportunities that each student should experience while at the school, her focus on developing a culture of mutual respect between staff and students, and her excellent relationship with parents and carers, influence all aspects of school life.
- Leadership and management is having a strongly positive impact in managing performance and ensuring that students are provided with a good curriculum that meets their needs and promotes good outcomes. This is reflected in their strong spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the remaining satisfactory teaching and improve the overall quality of teaching so that all students are provided with opportunities to make at least good progress by:

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- sharing the good practice that already exists in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment
- ensuring teaching and learning activities and approaches match the needs and abilities of individual students more closely
- ensuring that teachers engage and involve students more actively in learning during lessons
- developing the quality of teachers' questioning so that it is used to challenge students more effectively and to promote their higher-order thinking and oral skills
- developing consistently high-quality written feedback on students' work, and reviewing expectations about how students should actively respond to such feedback.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good because attainment is above average and most students make good progress from their starting points. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire, rightly, believe that their children are making good progress.

The standard students attain by the end of Year 11 is above average. Overall, students make good progress from their broadly average starting points. Middle-ability boys and students known to be eligible for free school meals are not achieving as well as all students. However, as a result of highly effective interventions, current school monitoring data indicate a narrowing of the gap in their attainment and progress. Disabled students and those with special education needs are making good progress in relation to their starting points, as are the small number of students from minority ethnic groups.

Lesson observations during the inspection indicated that students learn well and the quality of their work in a range of subjects is very good. The students are developing strong reading, writing and mathematical skills and their communication skills, in both written and verbal contexts, are particularly good. The school prepares its students very well for the next stage of their lives, with almost all progressing to further education, training or employment.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good because most teachers provide well-paced interesting lessons that engage students' interest and challenge them to think hard and make good progress. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire, rightly, believe that their children are taught well.

Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and many have an infectious enthusiasm

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for their subject that engages and motivates students, creating a buzz of excitement and curiosity. However, in less-successful lessons, teachers spend too much time 'telling' students information, rather than, for example, encouraging them to discover links between concepts themselves. As a result, students are not always encouraged to develop strong independent learning skills.

In the best lessons, teachers involve students in assessing their own and other students' work. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson about how a particular author uses language, students had developed a mature and technical vocabulary to support their peer assessment. Written feedback on students' work is regular and mainly detailed, including clear advice on how to improve. However, the quality of this is variable across subjects. Even when feedback is detailed, it is not clear how students are expected to respond and, thus, what impact it is having on improving students' subsequent work.

Teachers know students well and most use appropriate teaching strategies to ensure all students make good progress in their lessons. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson about liquids and solids, the teacher provided a range of tasks to challenge students based on systematic and accurate assessment of their individual abilities. However, work that is set for the whole class does not always match the needs of all students. As a result, some students, for example middle-ability boys in English and in mathematics lessons, make less progress than they might. Support for disabled students and those with special education needs is good and the well-targeted support they receive from teachers and other adults ensures they are able to participate fully in all learning activities.

In the best lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge students to think hard and respond with developed, higher-order answers that are shared with the whole class. In weaker lessons, questioning requires only one-word answers that indicate students can recall a particular word, but not whether they understand a concept.

Students develop good basic skills, particularly in literacy, through whole-school initiatives such as the silent reading tutorial sessions and library lessons in English. The impact of teaching on students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is strong. For example, in a Year 7 religious education lesson, students demonstrated good awareness of different religions and were able to talk thoughtfully and respectfully about these.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding because the ethos of the school – achievement, respect and community – is central to all relationships in the school and is embraced fully by students and staff.

Incidents of bullying and harassment are rare and when students have any concerns they are dealt with quickly and efficiently by staff. That is confirmed in questionnaire

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responses from parents and carers and by students. Students are eager to learn and are consistently punctual to lessons. Attendance is well above the national average and the rate of exclusions is well below the national average.

Teachers manage behaviour very well so that all students can learn in a calm, cooperative and inclusive atmosphere. The school's behaviour management system recognises and rewards effort and is applied consistently. Teachers treat students with dignity and respect and students respond positively with respect for their teachers and their peers. Disabled students and those with special education needs and students who face a range of challenging circumstances are supported very well by the school; parent and carer responses confirm this.

Students are able to take appropriate risks and are encouraged to do so while being very well informed about how to keep themselves and others safe. Students themselves make an exceptional contribution to the safe and positive learning environment at the school. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their children feel safe and most believe there is a good standard of behaviour

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good because school leaders ensure that the education students receive is good and they have every opportunity to achieve academic and personal success.

The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school and high expectations of staff and students. She drives the school's improvement agenda by her example of calm, clear focus and commitment. She is supported well by the senior leadership team, who reflect her caring, thoughtful and respectful approach to ensuring that every student is given the opportunity to flourish academically and personally. Parents and carers are very positive about her impact on the life of the school.

Leadership of all pastoral aspects of the school's work is excellent and this is reflected in the outstanding judgement for behaviour and safety. The impact of leadership on improving teaching and learning is good. Regular monitoring and evaluation of subject provision takes place and there is a clear link between professional development and performance management. Tracking of students' progress is good and improving. Subject middle leaders are developing their skills as strategic leaders accountable for performance in their areas of responsibility. The governing body holds senior leaders to account and provides good support.

Self evaluation is good. Leaders are clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school has very good capacity for improvement. This is evident in the significant improvements that have already taken place in behaviour and safety and in achievement, and the fact that the school is now first choice for an increasing number of parents in the area. All of the 65 staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire said they were proud to be a member of the school, demonstrating their support for and commitment to the school and its students.

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Curriculum provision is broad and balanced and meets the needs of students. Additional enrichment opportunities are available, as well as a wide range of extra-curricular activities that provide for the interests of all students. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is wide-ranging and has had a particularly strong impact on students' social development, which is outstanding. Partnership work with primary and other schools and colleges, as well as external organisations and agencies, ensures students are supported exceptionally well and contributes significantly to the school curriculum.

The school takes very seriously its responsibility to promote equality of opportunity and acts promptly and effectively at the first signs of any discrimination. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and exceed the statutory requirements the school is expected to meet.

Parental engagement is excellent and this is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive response from parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire. Almost all said that the school keeps them well informed and that they would recommend this school to other parents and carers. Many cited as features they value the example set by the headteacher, the fact that the school always gets back to them about any queries they raise within 24 hours, and that their children are safe and happy at the school.

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.



1 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Meole Brace School Science College, Shrewsbury, SY3 9DW

Inspectors enjoyed their visit to your school and would like to thank those of you who gave up their time in order to speak to us.

We judged your school to be a good school, where you achieve well because you are taught well by teachers who are enthusiastic about their subjects and aim to transmit that enthusiasm to you. We judged your behaviour and safety to be outstanding. Inspectors were impressed with your positive attitudes to learning and the mutual respect that was evident in your relationships with teachers and with other students. Leadership and management in the school are good and this ensures that all of you can enjoy a curriculum that meets your needs and opportunities that enable you to succeed.

We judged that many of you could make even better progress if certain aspects of teaching were to improve and therefore we have asked the headteacher to address the following areas:

- ensure teaching and learning activities match the needs and abilities of each of you more closely
- ensure that teachers engage and involve you more actively in learning during lessons
- develop the quality of teachers' questioning so that it is used to challenge you more effectively and to promote your higher-order thinking and oral skills
- develop consistently high-quality written feedback on your work and review expectations about how you should actively respond to such feedback.

You can help your teachers by continuing to attend regularly, to behave well and to contribute effectively in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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