

Meols Cop High School

Meols Cop Road, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 6JS

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement has risen substantially since the previous inspection. The overwhelming majority of students make significantly better progress than their peers nationally, particularly in English.
- Teachers plan lessons that engage and challenge students, ensuring all make at least good progress. Teachers are self-critical and keen to learn from each other as to how to improve their lessons further.
- Students enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe. Effective and consistently applied systems to manage poor behaviour ensure that lessons proceed well. Students are courteous and polite. They take great pride in their school.
- This school crackles with ambition. Leadership at all levels demonstrates a unified determination to drive further improvements in outcomes for students. Performance management has been used highly effectively in eradicating poor teaching and other areas of weakness. In addition, a vibrant culture of continuous improvement has been established, which is shared by all members of the school community.

The school has the following strengths

- The drive to promote literacy skills across the curriculum has been highly effective in securing improvements in achievement.
- The school provides a haven of support and aspiration. Individual students are valued and at the same time challenged to succeed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons and 27 teachers were seen.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and a representative of the local authority. Short discussions were held with groups of students during break and lunch time. Inspectors also observed groups of students reading.
- Inspectors considered an analysis of 38 responses to the on-line questionnaire, (Parent View), and in addition letters submitted by parents to the inspection team. Furthermore, inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in response to the questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's analysis of achievement over time, monitoring records on the quality of teaching and the school development plan.

Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Wareing	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jim Bennetts	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Meols Cop High School is smaller than the average size secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is greater than the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is greater than the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- A greater than average proportion of students join the school other than at the start of Year 7 and leave the school other than at the end of Year 11.
- The school works in partnership with the Sefton Education Business Partnership to provide work placements for a small number of students in Key Stage 4.
- The school has resourced provision for eight students with Asperger's Syndrome and also for a further twelve students with dyslexia.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further in mathematics by following existing good practice in the promotion of literacy and adopting a concerted drive to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- There has been a sharp rise in achievement since the previous inspection across a wide range of key indicators. All groups of students make progress that is at least as good as their peers nationally, and almost all groups make significantly better progress.
- In 2011, the proportion of students making or exceeding expected levels of progress in both English and mathematics was significantly above the national average.
- Students who sat public examinations in 2012 entered the school with prior attainment that was significantly below the national average. Nevertheless, according to unvalidated data provided by the school during the inspection, the overwhelming majority achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. In addition, performance in English improved further, with a large majority of students gaining a good GCSE qualification in this subject. A slight dip in performance in mathematics has been tackled swiftly and the examination entry policy in this subject has been changed to improve outcomes for students.
- All groups of students, particularly those supported at school action, school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs, achieve exceptionally well, as do those students eligible for the pupil premium. In the past, higher attaining students made slightly weaker progress than other groups in the school. This has been addressed by adapting the curriculum to better meet the needs of such students and in 2012 a greater proportion of the highest grades at GCSE were achieved across a range of subjects.
- A concerted drive to embed literacy skills across the curriculum has had a highly beneficial impact on students' achievement overall. Students express themselves articulately and with confidence. All classrooms have inviting displays of books which students can read, for example during form time. Students who arrive at the school with weak literacy skills and those for whom English is an additional language are supported highly effectively; as a result, many make rapid progress, enabling them to achieve well in their studies.
- In lessons observed during the inspection, students' achievement was rarely less than good and in many instances was outstanding.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching over time has been highly effective in securing and sustaining improvements in outcomes for students. Nevertheless, there is little complacency and teachers strive to improve still further the quality of their teaching.
- Teachers have a strong understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. They routinely design lessons that intrigue, engage and challenge their students. Indeed, teaching is sometimes inspirational. For example, in one Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher enthusiastically challenged the class to explain how a mathematician in Ancient Greece had managed to calculate the circumference of the Earth. There was a tangible sense of intellectual excitement and curiosity as one student used her knowledge of geometry to explain how this could be done.
- Teachers have high expectations, and skilled questioning enables them to assess students' progress effectively in lessons. Examples of exemplary marking were seen by inspectors and the frequently high quality of both written and oral feedback is appreciated by students. However, such good practice is not always the case and on rare occasions marking is somewhat cursory.
- The excellent attendance record of staff contributes well to the overall quality of teaching. Students know they can expect teaching that is rarely less than consistently good; as a result, students work well, apply themselves in lessons and appreciate the efforts their teachers make on their behalf.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- All parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire said that their child is happy at the school and feels safe. This sentiment was echoed by students. Students say that bullying and incidents of a racist nature are very rare but that when they occur they are dealt with highly effectively. The school provides a highly inclusive environment where diversity is welcomed and the individual is valued.
- Students understand clearly how to keep themselves and others safe; for example, students speak highly of how courses in information and communication technology have helped to raise their awareness of e-safety.
- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary. Lessons proceed productively because behaviour is, for the most part, impeccable. Systems to manage poor behaviour are widely understood by students and applied consistently by staff.
- The rate of exclusion is below the national average for all groups of students. There has been a steady improvement in attendance which is now slightly above the national average for the vast majority of students and punctuality is improving. A very high proportion of students did not miss a single school session in the last academic year.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders at all levels, including governance, have a shared vision for continuous improvement. The headteacher, well supported by her senior leadership team, has been unrelenting in her drive to raise aspirations. Furthermore, she has a comprehensive grasp of what the school needs to do to improve further. The school provides a beacon of stability and ambition for its community and has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection.
- Development planning is thorough and based on highly self-critical self-evaluation. The meticulous review of progress against targets underpins sustained improvement. Rigorous procedures for quality assurance are securely embedded and linked highly effectively to the management of performance. Staff and parents share the view that the school is well-led and managed. The school enjoys a good reputation in the local community and is repeatedly over-subscribed.
- The leadership and management of the quality of teaching have been highly effective in improving the quality of provision. Teachers are keen to share and learn from existing good practice and there is a tangible drive for further improvement.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, leading directly to outstanding outcomes. The school responds quickly to the needs of its students and there is a wide range of both academic and vocational qualifications. Students who attend alternative provision achieve well and the numbers of students who do not go on to further education, training or employment are very low.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the school's work. This is addressed and embedded across the curriculum and is also supported by the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer.
- The school demonstrates its capacity to improve further in that it has an excellent track record of improvement year on year and has successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- The school has effectively deployed resources to support students who are eligible for the pupil premium, for example, in providing one-to-one tuition and also to enable such students to participate in extra-curricular activities or to learn a musical instrument. As a result, these students are achieving far better than their peers nationally.
- Procedures for safeguarding are compliant. The school challenges prejudice of any description and promotes equality well.
- Procedures for performance management are rigorous and have contributed highly effectively to

the eradication of inadequate teaching and other weaknesses. Teachers understand that they are held to account for their performance and strive to achieve even better outcomes for students.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- is highly effective, proud of the school and ambitious for its students. The Chair of the Governing Body is capable and astute. He has used his wealth of business experience to support the school in challenging underperformance.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104956
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	402957

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	718
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew McQueen
Headteacher	Alison Heaton
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
Telephone number	01704 531180
Fax number	01704 532072
Email address	heaton-a@meolscophighschool.co.uk

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