

Maghull High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137520
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	395615
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2012
Lead inspector	Shirley Gornall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
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	1,252
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Howe
Headteacher	Mark Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons taught by 45 teachers. Six of these were joint observations with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors visited two assemblies, and several tutorial sessions. Discussions were held with the school's leaders, staff, groups of students, a local authority adviser and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the work of the school and considered a variety of documents including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation document, monitoring reports and behaviour logs. Inspectors scrutinised 174 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 143 completed by students and 87 from staff.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized high school and draws students from a wide area of north Liverpool. An average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of students are White British. The proportion of students who are supported at school action is much lower than average, although a higher than average proportion is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs, including complex medical needs. The proportion of students joining or leaving the school at times other than the usual transition points is slightly higher than the national average. The school converted to academy status in October 2011. It has been a specialist arts college since 2003 and it holds various awards including Artsmark (Gold), UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award, the 2010 Teaching Award for outstanding team of the year and a Warwick University enterprise award. The school's performance meets the government floor standards, which set 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because teaching over time has not secured good progress in all subjects and aspects of self-evaluation lack precision. The school is improving securely and has many positive features, including a dynamic performing arts specialism and a palpably inclusive ethos. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C is consistently well above the national average. Weaker progress in mathematics led to the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, being below average in 2011. Progress in mathematics is improving and standards are rising.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. Leadership, through coaching and mentoring, has secured improvements in many aspects of teachers' practice. Inconsistency remains in the level of intellectual challenge teachers pose for students, opportunities for students to develop their skills in working independently, and the quality of teachers' marking and students' response to it.
- Behaviour is good and the school is safe. Students' caring attitudes are evident in most lessons. Relationships between students and staff are mutually supportive. Bullying is rare and few students are excluded from the school's harmonious community.
- Leadership is good. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for students' success and performance management is rigorous. Key weaknesses have been tackled with rigour. Self-evaluation is embedded throughout the school, draws on wide-ranging evidence but sometimes does not take full account of performance data. Improvement planning addresses the school's key priorities but success criteria are sometimes imprecise.
- The sixth form is of good quality. Students enjoy their learning, make good progress, contribute enthusiastically to the main school and are well prepared for higher education or employment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate progress and raise attainment, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is good or outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to explain their ideas in order to deepen their thinking
 - ensuring that tasks are appropriately challenging to promote purposeful independent learning
 - ensuring that teachers' marking provides consistently high quality feedback to students, and that students act upon their teachers' comments.
- Ensure that self-evaluation takes full account of performance data and that all improvement plans include clearly defined success criteria.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly similar to the national average in some year groups and above it in others. They make satisfactory progress overall and achieve GCSE results which are similar to the national average in most subjects, higher in English literature and drama but lower in mathematics and religious education. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A* to C has risen consistently and is well above the national average. Progress is strong in English and the arts subjects, reflecting the powerful impact of the school's specialism. Students' learning in lessons confirms that their progress in mathematics is now accelerating, due to teaching that is more consistent, focused intervention and strengthened subject leadership. On the basis of examinations taken by students currently in the school, achievement in mathematics is showing strong improvement. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress that is at least as good as their peers. Those who are supported at school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs make particularly strong progress in response to sensitive and well-coordinated intervention.

Students relish opportunities to work collaboratively. Their most memorable learning experiences are often in music, art, drama and physical education where they engage in stimulating projects, both in lessons and during extra-curricular activities. They are less enthusiastic when lessons lack challenge or teachers' explanations are too lengthy. Students demonstrate good social skills when they work cooperatively. In some lessons, they are passive if teachers do not provide opportunities for them to work independently. Most students speak confidently and enjoy using their well-developed information and communication technology skills. Many read regularly for pleasure. Their writing is generally adequately detailed and they are aware of how to adapt it for different audiences and purposes.

Students enter the sixth form with attainment that is slightly lower than the national average. They make particularly strong progress in English, drama and media studies.

Advanced level results are in line with those attained nationally. Students following vocational courses achieve well. The sixth form is an integral part of the school and prepares students effectively for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with an increasing amount that is good and some that is outstanding. Inadequate teaching has largely been eradicated. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish positive, good-humoured relationships with their classes. In the best lessons, teachers communicate very high expectations and provide students with well-structured opportunities for collaborative and independent working. This was demonstrated powerfully in an outstanding drama lesson in which the teacher fostered students' empathy as they worked together to create insightful responses to a text concerned with the realities of trench warfare. The best teaching provides an interesting range of sequential activities that maintain students' engagement and deepen their understanding. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, students worked enthusiastically together to develop their understanding of factorisation. The teacher's skilful questioning required them to analyse and evaluate each other's responses and explain their thinking fully. In a highly effective sixth form music lesson, intuitive teaching and mature dialogue boosted students' self-esteem in terms of both performance and critical analysis.

Most teachers mark students' work regularly and provide clear advice on the steps they should take to improve it. Marking is of a consistently good quality in English, history and art. In some subjects, the quality of marking is too variable. Students do not routinely check on and apply their teachers' comments and this limits the effectiveness of some of the feedback they receive. Teaching assistants provide effective support that helps remove barriers to learning for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs.

Where lessons are satisfactory, teachers sometimes provide too much input and direction and this reduces opportunities for students to be fully challenged or to extend their thinking independently. Sometimes questioning does not prompt students to develop full responses.

The school places a high value on the teaching of reading. Students are provided with a variety of text types that most read confidently. Students' artwork is prominently displayed in school, celebrating their success and acting as a point of reference for others. However, there is relatively little written work displayed in classrooms. Most staff encourage students' use of correct technical vocabulary and model its usage. Teachers successfully foster students' engagement with ethical and moral issues, for instance through a well-informed discussion about how Christian ideas inform decision making in a religious education lesson. Arts subjects and English promote cultural understanding particularly well. Most parents and carers believe that their children are taught well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students are courteous, sensible and respectful of their teachers and each other. They value the school's Rights Respecting status, which involved students determining its ethos and behaviour code. Students consider instances of bullying to be very rare. Incident logs confirm this view and indicate that they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Different forms of bullying are openly discussed in various subjects and during tutorials. Students are well informed about internet misuse and know how to keep themselves safe online. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The school's Phoenix Centre provides excellent support to

vulnerable students and has a significant role in maintaining the school's inclusive climate for learning. As well as having trusted adults that they can turn to for advice, students have confidence in the school's peer mentors. Many students travel by bus to the school and report that they feel safe and comfortable on their journeys. Students know how to keep themselves healthy and take responsibility for their own actions.

Most parents and carers agree that behaviour at the school is good. A few feel that lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors took particular note of this view in scrutinising behaviour records, observing lessons and speaking with staff and students. They found that very few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour and that, when disruption occurs, it is dealt with swiftly. The level of fixed-term exclusions from the school is low, due to assiduous monitoring of behaviour and effective intervention with individual students and their families. Students' attendance has risen and it is above the national average. Very few students are persistently absent from the school and the vast majority are punctual to lessons.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good, resulting in improving achievement as a result of increasingly strong teaching. The headteacher and leaders at all levels are ambitious and committed to enabling all students to reach their potential. They provide a rich curriculum, and a stimulating choice of extra-curricular activities that enable students to pursue their interests. Students particularly value the extensive sports programme and the many opportunities they have to participate in dramatic and musical productions, including through the community arts festival that the school leads. The sixth form curriculum has been enhanced through collaboration with partner schools that enables a broad range of subjects to be offered.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted across the curriculum. International dimensions, including exchange visits, contribute to students' understanding of global diversity. Equality is emphasised through the school's curriculum and pastoral arrangements. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated and the school operates as a harmonious community.

Staff morale is high. Staff feel valued by the school's leaders and consider communication within the school to be good. Leaders at all levels have a tenacious approach to quality assurance. Lesson observations are undertaken regularly and inform performance management. A systematic programme of continuing professional development supports staff and enables sharing of good practice. The performing arts faculty has provided effective coaching support to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders have implemented a rigorous plan to address underachievement in mathematics, resulting in better outcomes now being evident for students.

Leaders do not always make links between lesson observations and other evidence of students' progress when evaluating the impact of teaching over time. The school's improvement plan is comprehensive and reflects leadership that has been distributed so that various staff have responsibility for key developments. Success criteria are not always closely linked to students' outcomes and this leads to the school's self-evaluation being overgenerous in some aspects. Leaders' track record of making improvements, along with their energy and drive, indicate that they have good capacity to develop the school further.

The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and contributes to its development. The school's safeguarding arrangements are regularly reviewed and meet requirements.

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.



12 July 2012

Dear Pupils/Students

Inspection of Maghull High School, Liverpool, L31 7AW

Thank you for the help that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to meet with us and those who completed the questionnaire. We have judged Maghull High School to be satisfactory and improving quickly.

Your achievement is satisfactory overall. Most of you make good progress from your starting points in English, but progress is weaker in mathematics. You achieve very well in performing arts subjects. Your behaviour is good. We were particularly impressed with the rights respecting work that you have done and we think that you play an active part in making your school safe and friendly. Your attendance is higher than in most schools and most of you clearly want to work hard.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Your teachers are dedicated and know you well as individuals. The school's leadership is good and provides you with an exciting range of opportunities to develop your talents and interests. The sixth form is good and gives a secure grounding for progression to university, college, or the world of work.

We have asked the school to do several things to continue to improve. First, the improvements in progress, especially in mathematics, should be sustained so that results improve. Second, we have asked your teachers to provide you with more opportunities to explain your ideas, and to make sure that your work is always challenging. We also think the quality of marking can be improved so that it is always as helpful as in the best examples we have seen in school. You can play your part by acting on the feedback your teachers give you. Finally, we have asked the school's leaders to make a few improvements to their self-evaluation and improvement planning.

We are very confident that you will support your school fully and help it improve further. We wish you every success in your education and your future lives.

Yours sincerely
Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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