

Morecambe Community High School

Dallam Avenue, Morecambe, Lancashire, LA4 5BG

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The majority of students in all year groups make good progress in lessons and learn well in many subjects.
- Since the last inspection, standards have steadily improved in mathematics, science and history and are in line with national standards.
- Teaching, learning and attendance have improved since the last inspection and are good.
- All Students show respect to others and have good opportunities to discuss and think about current moral issues.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are ambitious for students and expect them all to learn well and achieve high standards.
- Training for teachers to improve their work is planned by the headteacher and staff have already improved the quality of teaching in lessons over time.
- School governors question the headteacher, senior staff and subject leaders regularly, making sure they know what is working well in the school and that any weaknesses are dealt with.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There was an unanticipated decline in standards in English in 2012.
- There are a few lessons where teaching does not help some students learn as well as the majority.
- Leaders' and managers' evaluation of strengths and weaknesses has not yet improved all areas of the school.
- In a few lessons, teachers plan insufficient activities to improve speaking and literacy skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons and 45 teachers, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher and other senior staff.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, heads of subjects, leaders of support for students who need additional help, the Chair of Governors, groups of students, and an external consultant.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) received during the inspection.
- The inspection team viewed the school's work, scrutinised the school's data about students' achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents written by leaders to evaluate the school's work and their plans of how to improve further.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Jim Kidd	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average secondary school, with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is slightly greater than in most schools.
- There is a very low number of students from minority ethnic groups and a similarly low number of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend vocational and work placements at Lancaster and Morecambe College.
- The school's recent GCSE results meet the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school holds specialist status in mathematics and computing and holds a number of awards, including Healthy School, the Diana Memorial Award, Green Flag status, The Princes' Institute standard 2011 (English) and Sportsmark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - increasing activities requiring students to become more independent learners so they can use their learning more effectively in new situations
 - ensuring all teachers use skilful questioning to make students think about how clear their understanding is, how much they know, and how clearly they can explain their thinking
 - planning lessons which match tasks and activities more closely to where students, especially the able and most able, are in their learning, so they all make the best progress possible.
- Increase opportunities in all subjects to improve communication and literacy skills by:
 - ensuring all lessons require students to understand, talk about and use technical, subject based terms
 - ensuring all teachers' marking in all subjects gives students a consistent message about the importance of accurate spelling and punctuation, organised presentation and structure for different kinds of work, for example factual reports, stories, essays, advertisements and extended answers.
- Increase the rate of school improvement driven by leaders and managers by:
 - using up to date data, results of questionnaires and lesson observations to clearly identify where weaknesses remain in school
 - using analysis from school self-evaluation to not only target specific actions but also to make very clear what improvements are expected by specified times.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has improved in the last three years. The proportion of students gaining a Grade C in mathematics, history and science improved further in 2012. The proportion of students gaining Grade C in English was significantly lower in 2012, following consistent achievement similar to national standards from 2008 to 2011. Students eligible for the pupil premium achieved above national levels in 2011 and in 2012.
- When students join the school in Year 7, the majority are working at standards lower than found nationally in most subjects. Teachers plan lessons which lead to good achievement. Students do well in most lessons where interesting resources are used; questions are asked which make them think hard, and where activities are varied.
- Achievement has improved since the last inspection, particularly for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium as well as disabled students and those who have special educational needs, because the school provides extra help and explanations, additional sessions if they have missed work or extra practice and skilled support from teaching assistants.
- Improvements are less evident for students working at the higher levels in some lessons, because learning activities and tasks planned are sometimes too easy for them and, in some lessons, they are not always made to think hard enough and explain in detail the reasons for their answers.
- Students are entered for subject examinations at the end of Year 11 so they have the maximum length of time in lessons to ensure their progress enables them to demonstrate their best knowledge and understanding.
- Students read widely, particularly in Year 7, as a result of the good planning and the school's extensive and welcoming library.
- Students enter the sixth form working at standards lower than those found nationally in most subjects, and achieve particularly well in vocational subjects. Although students achieve less well in A and AS levels, achievement is good overall.
- Those students attending courses off site and those with personalised timetables achieve very well as a result of the careful course choices made and the committed support from staff. Their progress and attendance is closely monitored.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good across all year groups and in most subjects; there is a high proportion of outstanding teaching in the sixth form.
- Most teachers use questioning well to extend students' thinking and extend their knowledge and understanding so they are better equipped to write accurately, at length and in detail. In an English lesson, the teacher found, through talking to individual pupils, that there was a lack of understanding about how to create and use metaphors. The teacher then created an opportunity to question the whole class, reminding them of work they had done previously on metaphors, so they were clearer in how to introduce these into their writing.
- The careful balance of support and questioning for students helps them to think of new ideas and be clear about what they are doing well. In a technology lesson, students were shown high quality designs and prompted to adapt some features to their own work to be creative in progressing using their own ideas.
- Resources and tasks are carefully planned to interest students. In an art lesson, students' interest and engagement in the lesson was boosted by the teacher's use of subject knowledge to present excellent and varied examples of an artist's work.

- The majority of teachers share clear learning objectives with students and return to them during the lesson so that students are clear about what they are learning, and know if they are succeeding. Moreover, teachers have high expectations of their pupils and demonstrate a range of levels students can achieve so they can strive to reach the highest level and accurately assess their own work and of others.
- In the few lessons not as strong, expectations are not clear or are low, with students having too much done for them. Explanations and questions are general with the first answer accepted, and tasks and activities are the same for all so not all students achieve successfully, particularly those working at the higher levels. Some students are able to avoid answering questions and remain passive.
- Literacy and communication skills are not yet consistently developed across subjects so not all students are able to develop their discussions and explanations sufficiently to write confidently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. Poor behaviour in lessons is very rare and occurs when teachers tolerate low level talking, when teaching is not well planned and explanations are not clear or resources are not interesting and challenging.
- Students are clear about the steps taken by teachers when behaviour is not good and say teachers use these steps so their learning is not limited. A small number of parents expressed a view that behaviour was not always well managed but inspectors saw few lessons or instances around school where this was the case.
- Students are very clear that bullying, whilst it occurs at times, is always dealt with promptly. Discussions with older students revealed that they were aware younger pupils may feel vulnerable around school. Both younger and older students spoke highly of the positive impact of the 'seniors' role in giving older students leadership training in supporting others.
- The school's surveys and the online survey at the time of the inspection identified a majority of parents agreed bullying was dealt with well and almost all parents agreed their child was safe in the school.
- Students feel safe and exceptionally well cared for and feel the school is a strong community and staff are highly committed to helping them achieve their best. One sixth-form student said 'We are all one.'
- Governors receive regular information so they are fully aware of the steps taken in school to ensure the safety of all, particularly to remove any potential misuse of the internet and of mobile phones.
- Discrimination is rare with both students and staff recognising and dealing with any discriminatory language. Consideration of the rights and needs of all is threaded throughout the school. In a sensitively planned English lesson, Year 9 students discussed and explored the issue of exploitation with impressive maturity and interest, they extended their vocabulary and clarified their understanding of the form this could take and why it was wrong.
- Very few students are excluded from school with the Learning, Inclusion and Nurture Centre providing good support for those who would have been excluded in the past.
- Attendance has improved and is now good. The number of students who are persistently absent has reduced.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior staff have improved teaching since the last inspection, particularly by planning training for staff in questioning techniques and in the review of learning both during and at the end of lessons.
- Following the unanticipated decline in attainment in English in 2012 the school took immediate steps to ensure attainment is improved where possible and to ensure standards in the subject rise to above national levels in 2013. Teaching in the subject has been judged as consistently

strong and predictions are based on accurate tracking data. Inspectors found teaching to be predominantly good.

- Leaders have taken robust steps to monitor and evaluate teaching and their judgments are accurate. The school has good capacity to continue to improve. However, the outcomes of wider evaluation and of data analysis is not always used sufficiently rigorously to clearly identify remaining areas to improve, or to improve the small amount of weaker teaching further.
- Plans to continue to improve teaching and ensure all students achieve their best have identified the right actions to take but have not yet clearly identified how long it will take to complete the actions, nor the exact amount of improvement expected.
- The current arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are strong.
- There are good partnerships with agencies and a good range of support in school to ensure students who need extra help are well provided for and their achievement is good.
- There is a wide range of subjects taught and they are well organised to make sure the vast majority of students succeed, with students in the sixth form achieving particularly well in vocational subjects.
- The school's reflective, positive and inclusive ethos supports very good spiritual, social and moral development. School visits and involvement in local and international causes ensures cultural development is sound.
- The school and governors' arrangements for ensuring the safety of students and staff meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors understand well the current strengths of teaching and what needs to be done to improve the small amount of weaker teaching. They are relentless in their support of the headteacher and senior leaders in ensuring this improvement happens.
- Governors are clear about the use made of the funding received from the pupil premium initiative and know how it helped improve students' attainment in 2012. They have already discussed how to ensure it raises the standards of attainment in 2013.

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	119761
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	405887

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1439
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judith Catt
Headteacher	Mr John McNaughton
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2010
Telephone number	01524 410207
Fax number	01524 420156
Email address	reception@morecam.be

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