

Maryhill High School

Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 4DL

Inspection dates 7 – 8 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Boys have only recently begun to achieve as well as they should in mathematics.
- The teaching of mathematics, particularly to boys, does not always fully engage them in lessons and they do not get enough opportunities to develop their problem solving skills.
- Teachers expectations of what students can do, particularly the more able, are not always high enough.
- It is not always clear to all pupils what their next targets are in order to improve their work.
- The sixth form requires improvement because, given their level of achievement on entry into the sixth form, not enough students achieve the top grades at AS and A level compared to the national average.
- The school's leadership now have detailed information about students' progress and know what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. However they are not yet moving swiftly enough to target areas of underachievement.
- The school's self-evaluation is not always completely clear about its priorities for development.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students at age 16 gaining five or more A* to C passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has increased since 2010. It is now broadly in line with the national average for the first time in the history of the school.
- The progress that students make is gathering pace and the school's own information shows that the majority of current students are making at least good progress.
- School leaders have had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching over the past two years.
- Students show a very positive attitude to their lessons and there are rarely any disruptions to learning. They work well together in pairs and groups.
- An increasing proportion of middle and higher achieving students are making more than expected progress in English at Key Stage 4 and this is now above the national average.
- Reading is encouraged and supported throughout the school with catch-up classes for weaker readers in all year groups. Nearly every wall carries posters with literary quotations and suggestions for 'a good read'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons. Eight were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at break and during lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to three groups of students on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's plans for the future and ongoing reviews of those plans, and the school's records of their observations of teaching. They also took note of the school's records of the progress that students are making.
- The inspectors looked at behaviour logs, racist incidents and the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors took account of 31 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 63 responses to the staff inspection survey.
- Inspectors heard a group of students read on the first day of inspection and listened to students reading in lessons.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christopher Teal	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector
Suha Ahmad	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- Since the last inspection the school has had a new senior leadership team and has changed the arrangements of its sixth form partnership.
- The vast majority of students come from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students identified as speaking English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The percentage of students who are eligible for pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students with families in the armed services) is average.
- The proportion of students registered as disabled or with a statement of special educational needs or being supported at 'school action plus' is average, while the number of students supported at 'school action' is below average.
- Maryhill High School is one of four local schools in a recently-formed sixth form partnership known as the Trinity Sixth Form. Students in the sixth form have some of their lessons at these other schools.
- Three students in years 9, 10 and 11 attend The Cedars, a pupil referral unit, five days a week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has specialist status as a Media Arts College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more lessons are of a consistently good quality or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can do so that they plan interesting and challenging work, particularly for the more able
 - making sure that all students in mathematics, particularly boys, are fully and actively engaged in the lesson at all times.
- Improve students' progress and standards by:
 - setting targets that are clear to all students and particularly to those who may have made slow or little progress
 - giving students, particularly boys, regular opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills in mathematics
 - giving more students the confidence to aim for the top grades at GCSE and in the sixth form at AS and A level.
- Strengthen leaders' roles in monitoring the school's performance so that they have a swifter impact on students' achievement by:
 - sharpening the school's self evaluation and using it to inform further school development
 - making better use of the school's increasingly detailed information about students' progress to identify and tackle potential underachievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In mathematics in 2012 boys' standards at GCSE were lower than the national average and they made less progress than expected in mathematics compared to the national average. They were also making less progress than girls in the school in 2012 and the gap between boys and girls had increased since 2011. The proportion of students making more than expected progress in mathematics was also below the national average. All groups of students, including boys, have made significantly improved progress in mathematics since September 2012.
- Results for students entering the school over the last three years show an increasing number of students who achieved lower scores at the end of Key Stage 2 and a decreasing number of students who achieved high scores. The increasing proportion going on to achieve the upper grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is testimony to how well senior leaders have improved teaching and raised standards.
- The proportion of students at age 16 who have achieved GCSE grades A* to G over the last three years has consistently been above the national average and has been very close to 100%.
- In the sixth form, more students than is the national average achieve grades from A* to E at both AS level and A level. However, the sixth form requires improvement because, given their starting points, not enough students achieve the top grades at AS and A level compared to the national average.
- The performance of students studying Psychology, Law and Media at AS level is higher than the national average and the proportion of students continuing their studies from AS level in Year 12 to A level in Year 13 is also above the national average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs sometimes make better progress than others. This is often because of the support they receive from well-trained and experienced teaching assistants who work very effectively both alongside classroom teachers and in smaller groups and one-to-one sessions.
- The school is working hard to tackle discrimination and inequality, particularly for the most vulnerable. In both English and mathematics the gap in the progress made by all students and that made by those students who are eligible for the pupil premium is narrowing. The money from this funding is used to offer additional one-to-one and small group tuition, access to a computer-based support programme for literacy and the services of specialist support staff. In addition the school has recently received Year 7 catch-up funding this year and has yet to allocate it.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching of mathematics, particularly to boys, does not always fully engage them in lessons and they do not get enough opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can do, particularly the more able, are not always high enough. For example, teachers do not always provide a range of different activities in a lesson to challenge and stretch students.

- The majority of teaching observed during the inspection was graded good or better with a number of examples of outstanding practice and there was no inadequate teaching seen. Although this is in line with the school's own monitoring, the judgement of the quality of teaching over time is that it requires improvement as the impact of better teaching is only beginning to be seen in students' progress and the raising of standards.
- Some of the many strengths in teaching include: the consistent use across the school and in all subjects of a marking system that students find helpful; the regular setting of homework to consolidate and extend learning; good use of pace to maintain interest in the majority of lessons; encouraging and developing students' use of information and communication technology; support for independent learning, particularly in the sixth form; teachers' use of questioning to constantly check students' understanding and knowledge; strong and positive relationships between students and teachers.
- Reading is taught well and teachers in all subject areas mark for literacy. For those younger students who find reading difficult there are weekly, paired reading sessions with sixth formers. Groups of students in every year group are given regular access to a computer suite with dedicated programmes for supporting literacy. Speaking and listening are also actively taught across the school and this is resulting in the growing confidence of students in voicing opinions and debating issues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students in lessons is good. They are eager to learn and there is seldom any disruption in classrooms. In the course of the inspection out of the 36 lessons observed, 30 were judged good or better for behaviour.
 - Students' attitudes to their peers, staff and other adults around the school are very positive. There is recognition of this through the Maryhill Acts of Random Kindness (MARK) scheme.
 - The school has robust procedures for managing behaviour and is able to identify patterns by using a comprehensive behaviour log and then taking coordinated action, working with external agencies where necessary. The school's own records and conversations with students confirm that bullying occurs rarely. When an incident, like persistent name-calling, does occur, students are confident in reporting it and the school responds swiftly and effectively. Parental views of behaviour are also largely positive and staff views are overwhelmingly so.
 - Permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions have fallen to below national levels as a result of the school keeping a close eye on the behaviour of students and taking action at an early stage. Case studies reveal marked improvements in behaviour over time.
 - Attendance and punctuality is above average and students, particularly the younger ones, talk positively about rewards such as prizes and vouchers for 100% attendance. The attendance of students off site at the pupil referral unit is monitored by the school. Some good progress is being made with improved reading ages and students' readiness to return to Maryhill.
 - The students feel that their voice is listened to and their suggestions, such as for charity events, are acted on. They are given significant responsibilities as mentors to younger students and there is an active and influential school council.
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The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the school require improvement because underachievement has not always been spotted quickly enough in the past. Senior leaders now have detailed information about students' progress and know what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. They are now moving more swiftly to target areas of underachievement. For example, in their response to the poor performance of boys in mathematics they have created smaller classes; trialled putting students into single sex groups; created more points at which progress is assessed; set up one-to-one sessions for those finding it hardest; and carefully tailored teaching groups to best suit students' needs not only by ability but by specific topic and by teaching styles. As a result, recent assessments show students are now making accelerated progress.
 - Religious education at the school has improved significantly since an inspection of the subject in 2011. This is as a result of actions taken by the senior leaders and governors, with support from the local authority. The proportion of students at age 16 gaining A* to C in religious education at GCSE has improved in the last two years from being well below the national average to being broadly in line. The leadership of the department, the choice of what is studied, and the quality of teaching in the subject are now good. For example, during a religious education lesson observed during the inspection, Year 10 students sensitively addressed the issue of religious attitudes to homosexuality. The teacher managed the discussion well with carefully chosen materials and the students showed a good understanding of different religious points of view.
 - School leaders have secured a new sixth form partnership with the Trinity Sixth Form College. Students in Year 12 speak highly of the new arrangements and the school is now closely monitoring the progress of its lower sixth both at Maryhill and at the other sites. In addition to AS and A levels, some students take Applied A level and BTEC courses.
 - The school does not put students in for early entry to GCSE examinations and has a commendably flexible curriculum. This allows the school to tailor what it offers to suit a particular cohort by, for example, adopting a three rather than two year GCSE programme for the current Years 8 and 9.
 - The headteacher has been uncompromising in tackling underperformance in teaching and her approach to performance management is evident in the staff's understanding of what is required in order to make progress on the salary spine.
 - The school meets all the statutory requirements regarding the safeguarding of students and there are examples of good practice in the meticulous and colour-coded management of the school's single central record of staffing details.
 - Parental involvement is actively encouraged and a high proportion of parents attend information evenings and school events. The majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) felt that the school effectively communicated information about their child's progress.
 - Students show an understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity. For example, Year 7 students spoke to an inspector with understanding and interest about visits to a Muslim mosque and a Sikh gurdwara. Through assemblies the school celebrates festivals such as the Chinese New Year and Eid and these also offer opportunities for reflection. Links to the Youth Parliament and the local council indicate a strong awareness of citizenship. The school also organises 'focus days' through the year when students come out of lessons to look in more depth at
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environmental, health and social issues.

- There are opportunities for students to be involved in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. Clubs for photography and art are particularly popular as is the opportunity to compete in netball and football teams. The school runs the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and has a particularly high uptake of participants.
 - Although the local authority has provided support for the school when it has been requested, such as that given to improve the delivery of religious education, it has not always challenged the school over weaker performance, such as in mathematics.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body have a clear and realistic view of what is happening in the school and take very seriously all their statutory duties. They make good use of committees and link governors, as well as external advisors, to develop a good understanding of the detailed information provided by the school and how to compare it to other similar schools. They have regular contact with teachers and an involvement in the day-to-day life of the school. The governors are financially prudent and are aware of the impact of school spending such as the pupil premium funding that allowed students in 2012 to reach their targets through one-to-one English and mathematics tuition.
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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	124405
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	403749

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	670
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Rosser
Headteacher	Fiona Hewardine
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2010
Telephone number	01782 296751
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