



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

THE MATTHEW HOLLAND SCHOOL

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LEA: Nottinghamshire

Inspection Number: 269316
Inspection Dates: 11 – 13 MAY 2004
Reporting Inspector: Pam Haezwindt HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of The Matthew Holland School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

The Matthew Holland School is an average size, secondary comprehensive school for boys and girls aged between 11 and 16. It is situated in semi rural, north Nottinghamshire. It has almost 900 pupils. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with very variable attainment from year to year. Currently pupils enter the school having achieved results which are just below average. The number of pupils who have special needs is above the national average. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and all pupils have English as their mother tongue. The school was last inspected in 1999.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Effectiveness of the school

This is an adequate school which is improving. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and they enjoy coming to school. The large majority of learners make at least satisfactory progress and standards are rising. The school has created a good ethos for learning in which pupils thrive. Developments in recent years have ensured that there has been steady improvement but, as the school knows, there are improvements still to make in the standards achieved. Currently, teaching is not yet consistently focused on pupils' learning to ensure that achievement is always as good as it possibly could be. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

Grade: 3

Improvement since the last inspection

There has been steady improvement since the inspection five years ago. The senior management team has good aspirations for the school and is gradually moving towards achieving them. Teaching is improving steadily and as a result more learners are making good progress than at the time of the last inspection and standards are rising. All of the key issues from the last inspection have been tackled and a number of initiatives put in place to raise pupils' achievement. Improvement has not been as fast as the school would have wished, partly due to scarce resources and the significant variations in attainment of pupils on entering Year 7.

Grade: 3

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good. Leadership is good at the senior level. It has high aspirations for the school and the drive and energy to achieve them. The school recognises the areas in which improvements are needed, what actions need to be taken, and knows that it needs to take them speedily to become as an effective a school as possible.

Inspection Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards and pupils' achievement, the school should:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by focusing at every level in the school on learning and outcomes
- increase the breadth and balance of the curriculum to more effectively meet the needs of all learners
- increase the opportunities that pupils have to develop their cultural awareness and understanding.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The last Ofsted inspection report judged standards to be low with insufficient progress made in most subjects. The school judges that the standards achieved by its pupils are now adequate and the inspection evidence confirms this. There has been a steady improvement in results over recent years and in Key Stage 3 this is higher than the national trend.

By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils achieve standards which match those achieved by most schools nationally. When compared with pupils with similar starting points they achieve good results overall, especially in mathematics, where they do very well, and in science. Their achievement in English is not as good, despite some good and very good teaching, partly because the targets set are too modest.

Compared with all schools the number of pupils who achieve 5 A* - C in their GCSE examinations is well below average. Even compared with pupils with similar starting points it is below average, although in 2002 results were well above average, a reflection of the variability of the starting points of pupils who enter the school year on year. Overall, the trend is steadily upwards. The number of pupils gaining 5 A*-G is average and almost all pupils achieve at least one GCSE. When compared with pupils with similar starting points this is very good progress and is a measure of the school's caring qualities in ensuring that all pupils achieve accreditation.

The predictions for Key Stage 3 and GCSE results indicate that they should continue to improve and the overall good progress made by pupils in lessons seen supports these predictions. Pupils in the learning support unit make good progress given their starting points. The efforts made by the school to improve the standards of the most able pupils are evident in the mathematics results in Key Stage 3 but are not evident in the results for other subjects or in the results at Key Stage 4.

Grade: 3

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school rightly judges that the personal development of its pupils is good. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They arrive punctually and ready to learn. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and, as a result, attendance levels are in line with the national average. In lessons most pupils behave well. They contribute their ideas enthusiastically and, when given the opportunity, thrive on responsibility, at times showing a high level of maturity and self-confidence. Pupils show an interest in school life and respond positively when their views are sought. Through surveys, and the work of an energetic School Council, they are able to express perceptive and helpful opinions on a wide range of topics. They are motivated by the serious consideration the school gives to their views and take pride in subsequent improvements.

Pupils are positive about the opportunities to take part in links with the wider community. The school helps them to improve their self-confidence and broaden their horizons but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experience of cultural diversity, or to confront racial prejudice through discussion. Pupils are enthusiastic when given opportunities to reflect on and debate spiritual and moral issues and have a very good understanding of the need to listen to and reflect upon opposing points of view. Pupils are motivated strongly by the recognition and celebration of their achievements around the school. They reflect upon their own strengths, both personal and academic, and the majority are ambitious for themselves. During the inspection a Key Stage 4 assembly enabled pupils

to reflect well about their life chances and individual strengths. Pupils are considerate of others. They help each other in lessons, and work together with school staff to combat bullying.

Grade: 2

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school has judged that its quality of provision overall is adequate. The evidence from this inspection supports this judgement, but the picture is an improving one and there are very significant strengths in the school's care and support for its pupils.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and has improved since the last inspection. The school judges from its monitoring and evaluation that well over half of its lessons are now good or very good. The sample of lessons observed during the inspection supports this assertion. However, despite the school's highly focused efforts to improve teaching, there is still a proportion of lessons in which pupils make insufficient progress. Overall teachers know their subjects well. Most teachers, but not all, make very clear to pupils what they want them to learn and plan well to achieve this for all pupils. In many lessons teachers assess well the progress pupils are making and adapt their lessons accordingly. Challenge, high expectations and stimulating activities are features of the good and very good lessons. Pupils enjoy these lessons and are motivated to learn.

Extra curricular activities in some areas such as music, information and communication technology (ICT), literacy, sport and coaching and revision add significantly to pupils' learning. There is a generally good climate for learning throughout the school. However, there were few examples of pupils' learning independently or being prepared to do so, a key area for improvement in the last inspection. Pupils are generally aware of how well they are doing, where they need to improve and how. There are some excellent examples of marking and target setting but this is not yet consistent so some pupils are better served than others.

The previous report noted that the school provided a broad and balanced curriculum which met the needs of most students appropriately. This is still the case but the school's own self evaluation acknowledges that progress in addressing some shortcomings has not been as rapid as hoped.

While the most able students cope with the demands of an eight or nine GCSE curriculum many average and below average ability students do not, although pupils with special educational needs are particularly well catered for. The school is now compliant in physical education, RE and ICT though the lack of three dimensional work in art is still an acknowledged shortcoming. Plans to develop a more responsive curriculum built around an informed assessment of pupils' needs are well advanced and senior managers have well considered plans to develop the provision of creative arts subjects.

In 2003, after several years of poor student achievement and costly provision the school rightly closed its sixth form. This has allowed more teaching resources to be focused on the 11-16 curriculum. The school is now developing several well judged courses most of which are targeted at less academic pupils. The Skills Force aimed at pupils at risk of becoming disaffected and those with challenging behaviour has a considerable beneficial impact. Likewise the Gold Curriculum targeted at pupils requiring intensive support. However, efforts to develop more vocationally focused courses have had more limited success so far, there is still much work to do to update the personal, social and health education and citizenship course, and the provision for pupils' cultural development is not as broad enough. Pupils are critical of the limited amount and variable quality of the careers education they receive.

The school provides a suitable range of out of class activities which significantly enhance the curriculum for many pupils. The extent to which pupils take advantage of the provision varies and some pupils think there is insufficient provision. Some activities observed such as in music were of high quality and were well attended. In addition to lunch time activities many teachers give generously of their time to run off site fieldwork, theatre trips as well as social activities for year and form groups.

The school cares for its learners well. There is a very strong concern for pupils' well-being, welfare and safety and school systems enable the staff to know pupils well and act promptly when they need support. Strenuous efforts are made to forge positive links with parents, to gain the support of external agencies and to meet the needs of individual pupils. These are effective in helping pupils overcome some of the barriers to their learning. Reports to parents inform them about their youngsters' progress and the efforts they make. The Learning Support Unit makes outstanding provision for individual pupils through well-tailored programmes of learning, effective support and meticulous monitoring of progress. Detailed assessments of pupils' special educational needs contribute to the good quality of individual education plans and to helpful targets.

School rules and routines are clear and operate successfully. Pupils understand what is expected of them and know the consequences should they fail to comply. The organisation of the school helps pupils feel secure and safe. They value their involvement in the school's improvement and the opportunities for them to contribute to this. Through increasing target setting and mentoring pupils are helped to develop a good understanding of what they need to do to improve but they are not always sure of the career choices available to them. Personal health is promoted strongly in the school. Work for the Healthy Schools Award has increased pupils' awareness of the contribution of diet and physical activity to health although this is not always reflected in the choices they make. The arrangements for child protection are good and the school ensures that these are communicated to staff, including trainee teachers. The school gives good consideration to the safety of its environment, including the reduction of the high level of litter in the grounds.

Grade: 3

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher, the governors and senior managers is good. The head teacher and the senior management team are aspirational and committed to getting the very best for the school. They have a good vision for the school and set a very focussed direction towards raising pupils' achievement. This has led to steady improvement since the last inspection in a number of areas of the school including pupils' progress, their personal development, and the consistent and continuous development of care, support and guidance. There is a very strong focus on teaching and learning in the school's quest to raise standards, which is reflected in the strategic planning. Staff are well motivated and want to do their best by the school and its pupils. Currently, the leadership and management of subjects is variable but there is effective practice that the school can draw on to ensure that this quickly becomes good overall.

The school's self evaluation demonstrates that the school knows itself well and knows where it needs to improve its practice. Many changes have been introduced in recent years in order to do so. The staffing structure has been quite considerably altered and recent strategic appointments have been made to support the school's vision of raising achievement by improving teaching and learning. The school rigorously analyses and interprets the information it gathers to determine where and what improvements need making and there are clear systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching on a very regular basis. Staff professional development is well linked to monitoring and performance management.

Despite the hard work, the school does not yet focus sufficiently on pupils' learning and their outcomes and not all staff implement the school's systems as well or as consistently as they need to. In discussions with senior staff it is clear that they have recently recognised this and are poised to make the changes needed.

The school is committed to promoting an inclusive environment in which every child is cared for and guided to achieve the best possible. It has improved the quality of its education in significant ways since the last inspection but recognises that it still has some way to go. The school is in touch with parents and listens to them. It has quite extensive links with many external bodies which support well pupils' development, for example, other schools, universities and colleges and the local parish council.

The accommodation is adequate and the school makes efficient use of its building and scarce resources to enable its pupils to flourish, except for the library which is much under used. The leadership team took the brave and rightful decision to close its sixth form, and has all but eradicated a deficit from the time of the last inspection. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school has assessed its leadership and management as good. The evidence from this inspection shows that overall it is sound with significant strengths in leadership at senior level.

Grade: 3

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