



Marple Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106138
LEA Stockport
Inspection number 277497
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr John Coleman HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Hill Top Drive
School category	Community		Marple
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Stockport, Cheshire SK6 6LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 427 7966
Number on roll	1584	Fax number	0161 426 0931
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr N Griffiths
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs L Calderbank

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	23 May 2006 - 24 May 2006	277497

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Marple Hall School is a larger than average sized 11-16 mixed comprehensive. It is popular and oversubscribed. Students are drawn from a wide area and over half of the school population arrives by bus. The school is situated on a split site. Students are predominantly White British with a below average number from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are only a few students for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.

The school achieved specialist school status as a language college from September 2005. There are many long-serving staff who contribute to the strong sense of tradition and belonging in the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's view is that it provides a satisfactory quality of education and inspectors agree with this judgement.

Students' results in national tests and GCSE examinations have been consistently above average since the previous inspection. Students' progress is satisfactory, though there is variation in performance between groups of students and between subjects. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is highly regarded by staff and governors and she is instrumental in driving forward the school's priorities for improvement. Teaching is satisfactory; there are examples of outstanding and also of inadequate practice. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching is hindering the progress that some students make. The school provides a broad range of learning opportunities including very good extra-curricular activities of which students speak highly. Students' personal development is good and students make a strong contribution to the community. There are a small number of instances of unsatisfactory behaviour which is of concern to parents, students and staff. A behaviour support programme has been introduced but it is too soon to judge the quality of its impact. Systems to care for and guide students in the choices they make are good.

Specialist language college status is effectively improving students' cultural development and making a positive impact upon the curriculum experiences of students. The school's leadership team has been restructured and senior staff are well aware of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Consequently, the school has good capacity for improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the school's senior leaders and governors track the performance of students and teaching rigorously, focus sharply on priorities and take effective action to deal with weaknesses.
- Eliminate areas of underachievement by ensuring the quality of teaching is of a consistently good standard.
- Ensure the school's strategies for improving behaviour are consistently applied by all staff and adhered to by all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The students enter the school with slightly above average results and standards from their primary schools. GCSE results and the work of the current students show that standards are above average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is therefore satisfactory. Whereas students' progress is good during Key Stage 4, it is satisfactory in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science during Key Stage 3. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress throughout.

The students' results in the 2005 Key Stage 3 tests were above average, matching recent results. However, analysis of the results reveals a lack of consistency in performance by different groups of students. For example, the highest attaining students did not do as well as they should in English but did better than expected in science. On the other hand, the lowest attaining students made better progress in English than in the other two subjects. The school recognizes this mixed picture. It is taking action to improve results across all subjects through a more rigorous approach to assessment, teaching and learning. As yet, it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives on test results.

The students' results in the 2005 GCSE examinations were above average, in line with recent results. The percentage gaining 5 grades at A* to C fell in 2005 but was in line with those students' standards on entering the school. Results were particularly high in English literature, art, history and vocational studies. The boys' progress was especially good, whereas girls' progress was satisfactory. Progress is faster in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 because: students enjoy the broader range of courses on offer; their good skills in literacy and numeracy support their work effectively; and they clearly know their target grades and how to achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities which contribute very effectively to students' social, physical and cultural education; there is a high level of student involvement.

There is good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the prominence the school gives to charity work provides opportunities for students to think about the needs of others and work in teams in order to raise money for good causes. Students explore other cultures through international days and trips abroad. They also develop some awareness of cultural diversity in Britain and learn to respect people of different backgrounds. This was seen in a Year 10 religious studies lesson on 'Loving Your Neighbour' where students discussed issues of racism and diversity in the United Kingdom.

As a result of good participation in school life such as through students' and year councils and peer mentoring by year 10, there is good development of citizenship skills. The school encourages students to adopt healthy lifestyles as demonstrated through the range of healthy options available in the canteen, and in the way in which relevant themes are covered across the curriculum. The school is also encouraging cycling to school by having recently provided new, safe bike sheds.

Students' attendance and enjoyment of their work are good. Parents in general are satisfied with the quality of their children's education. However, whilst measures are now in place and constantly reviewed, to improve behaviour, they are not always consistently applied by staff or followed by all students. Consequently, there is some unsatisfactory behaviour in and around the school and this is a concern to some students, staff and parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory, with examples of outstanding and inadequate practice. When teaching is most effective, the emphasis is upon making sure that students are actually learning what they are being taught. Thus the topic is clearly explained, students have the chance to ask questions, and to answer good, relevant questions that make them think more deeply. The teacher then uses a part of the lesson to consolidate understanding. In the best lessons the work suitably challenges all students, the pace is brisk and the work is varied. Teachers set high standards in the way in which they work themselves and, in turn, they have high expectations of students. This also ensures that students concentrate well and that relationships are good.

There is considerable inconsistency across the school. Not enough teachers carefully assess all students' individual needs and use this to determine what and how they will teach. Thus, for example, gifted and talented students are generally not effectively challenged. When lower attaining students have support from an adult in class they make good progress. However, when this is not provided, and they are dependent upon the class teacher to ensure the work covered is of an appropriate level, progress is relatively slow. Excellent examples were seen in the use of information and communication technology (ICT), but in general it is used too little in teaching and learning. The quality of marking ranges from providing high quality feedback that helps students to improve to being very superficial and accepting low standards of effort and presentation from some students. In the inadequate lessons seen, the purpose of the lesson was not clearly explained, the lesson lacked pace, students became bored and talked amongst themselves on matters of their own choice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. It is broad and balanced and fully meets statutory requirements. Provision is continuously reviewed and adapted to meet changing needs. The school recognises the need to deliver an increasing part of the curriculum through the effective use of ICT. Students study a wide range of subjects and appropriate time is given to each. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' overall personal and social development, and due importance is given to citizenship, enterprise and work related learning.

There are effective curriculum links with neighbouring institutions. At Key Stage 4 such links have provided for flexibility in the range of pathways available to students and there is a good choice of vocational courses. Effective management of collaborative provision with local colleges ensures that students are not disadvantaged by working on different sites. A measure of the impact of this provision is that students across the ability range are involved with vocational courses. In addition, the organisation of

the building into well structured teaching blocks enhances the facility for the curriculum to be more closely tailored to meet individual needs. For example, students can study the three separate sciences.

An outstanding feature is the school's extra-curricular provision, which students recognise is a particular strength of the school. Activities are much enjoyed by students. They cater for a range of interests and abilities, are wide-ranging, including sports, music, drama, art, residential visits, community projects, and some are religious and subject based. The school's facilities, particularly in sport and languages, are used well to involve the community and students are actively involved in a range of community service activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Procedures to ensure health and safety are effective and widely understood. Students feel safe and secure in school and they are appreciative of the enhanced security measures around the perimeter of the school site. Appropriate child protection procedures and rigorous risk assessments are in place. The pastoral team is strong and students are confident that there are adults they can turn to if the need arises. Occasional incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with. Monitoring of students' progress by the pastoral team and subject leaders is having an increasing impact on the achievements of students. Consequently, the more vulnerable students, and the small number at risk of becoming disaffected, are well supported. Furthermore, very good advice and guidance arrangements are successful in enabling students to make a smooth transition from one stage of their education to the next. Parents are fully involved in these arrangements.

Students report that they have good support for their emotional needs through the support of a school counsellor and being able to use the Student Support room. They value the good pastoral support available throughout their time in the school and the opportunities they have for work-related learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Above average test and examination results have been maintained over the past five years but the school recognises the need to improve students' achievements.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2004. She gives clear direction in identifying raising standards of attainment as the key priority for the school. Improving the consistency of good quality teaching is prioritised by the leadership to achieve this aim. The senior leadership team is fully committed to the need for change in a number of areas. Re-organisation of the senior staffing structure, led by the headteacher, is encouraging initiative, autonomy and accountability. These developments are changing the culture of the leadership of the school. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is an accurate one based upon an effective system

of consultation and monitoring. However, there is a need for more detailed strategic planning with agreed targets and a measurable means of success in order to ensure greater consistency and accountability. The senior leadership team is aware of staff development needs in implementing these changes. They are determined to maintain the rapid rate of change whilst allowing the whole staff to move forward together.

The governors are effective in their supportive role and are fully behind the school's improvement initiatives. Recent developments to increase governors' involvement through linking individuals to subject areas are beginning to raise their awareness of the relative strengths of the school. Consequently, this is improving governors' ability to challenge the school where appropriate.

The financial demands of the large school site are well managed and resources are effectively allocated. In particular, the management of recent staff restructuring is impacting strongly on the leadership capacity to bring about sustained improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

- You said that the staff in school care about you and help you to do well. We agree, and we like the way they help you prepare for life in the future.
- We are impressed that examination results, which are above average, have been maintained for many years and have asked the school to ensure that all of you make even more progress.
- The inspectors agree with the school's ideas about what should be done next to make things even better for you. Mrs Calderbank is already making improvements to many areas.
- We have asked the senior teachers and governors to ensure that all of your lessons are interesting and challenging for all students.
- You also have an important part to play in improving your school. The staff are trying to get the best out of you and sometimes the behaviour of students makes this even more difficult. We have asked that there are improvements to encourage everyone to behave well.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We all hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Marple Hall School an even better place to be.