



# Magdalen College School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122094  
**LEA** Northamptonshire  
**Inspection number** 281167  
**Inspection dates** 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Philippa Francis HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Waynflete Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Brackley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Northamptonshire NN13 6FB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01280 846300
<b>Number on roll</b>	1475	<b>Fax number</b>	01280 704876
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Hugh Cooper
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elaine Wotherspoon

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1 February 2006 - 2 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281167
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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**

Magdalen College is a specialist mathematics and computing school. It is based on a split site in the centre of Brackley town. The school is larger than average, with 1,192 pupils in the main school and 284 in the sixth form. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is broadly average. The numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals and from minority ethnic groups are very low.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. This judgement matches the school's own assessment of its work. The school plays an important part in the local community, is oversubscribed and is generally well supported by parents. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers ensure that a high level of care is provided for the school's pupils and they make good progress in their personal development. Achievement has improved and is satisfactory with good progress made in mathematics. However, achievement in 2005 at Key Stage 4 was below average especially in English and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils enjoy school and participate well in many extra-curricular activities. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The system for monitoring teaching has been appropriately updated, but is not yet consistently used. Specialist school status has had a very positive effect on teaching in mathematics but much less impact as yet in ICT. Monitoring of pupils' progress has improved substantially very recently. It is used by all managers but not yet all teachers to identify underperformance and take action. Since the last inspection attendance has improved and behaviour remains good. The achievement of boys improved to be in line with average overall in 2004 but declined in 2005. Actions taken to improve achievement in English have been successful at Key Stage 3 and recent actions to improve provision at Key Stage 4 in both English and ICT are proving effective. Self-evaluation is accurate with sharply focused priorities for improvement and the school has the capacity to improve further. It provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Standards are average and improving. Pupils progress in line with expectations. Girls achieve better than boys. Pupils studying vocational courses make good progress. A very good programme for personal development broadens pupils' outlook, gives them responsibilities and prepares them well for the future. Teaching overall is satisfactory with some good features including the use of challenging and suitably varied teaching methods. Teachers build very positive relationships with the pupils who enjoy being in the sixth form. The good care, guidance and support given ensure most pupils complete their courses. The wide choice of courses available offers opportunities for all pupils to find a programme of study to suit their ability and interests. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that procedures for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress across the school are used consistently and effectively by all teachers.
- Raise levels of achievement in ICT and English at Key Stage 4.
- Use monitoring of teaching and learning consistently across the school to identify areas for development and further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory across the school, including in the sixth form. Pupils begin school with broadly average attainment on entry and standards overall are satisfactory. In 2005 all pupils made good progress from Year 7 to Year 9, especially in mathematics. Girls made particularly good progress. Pupils in Year 11 in 2005 underperformed, especially boys. All these pupils had made slow progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, especially in English. Between Key Stages 3 and 4 their progress improved overall but remained below average in English. The school has taken effective action to improve progress, particularly in English at Key Stage 3 where it is now satisfactory. The school's tracking of progress being made by current Year 11 pupils shows improvement and a satisfactory position. Inspectors confirmed this through observing progress made in lessons, considering results of mock examinations and the standards of work being produced. Standards at Key Stage 3 over the last five years show an improving trend up to 2004 when they were overall exceptionally high. However standards declined in 2005 to be in line with average except in mathematics where they remained above average. Standards at Key Stage 4, by most measures, have shown steady improvement over the last five years. Specialist status has helped pupils gain especially good results in mathematics. However, results in English have declined from an above average position to average. Results in ICT were well below average for all pupils in 2005 largely as a result of an inappropriate curriculum time allocation. Significant action has been taken to improve this situation and current standards of work are at least satisfactory.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school, are generally well motivated and interested in their lessons. Attendance is good. The school provides a safe environment for its pupils and very effective procedures are in place to deal with occasional instances of unacceptable behaviour or bullying. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles, particularly effectively through lessons in personal, social and health education, physical education, food technology and science. This is reflected for example in their request for healthier food in the school's canteen. Pupils participate in a wide range of activities such as sport, clubs and musical performances both within the school and the wider community. Through a pupil leadership group, they take on responsibilities and contribute to the life of the school. Pupils develop a good sense of social awareness and a clear set of values within the school's strong moral framework. Their spiritual development is satisfactory and they develop a good appreciation of cultural diversity. They participate in charitable events enthusiastically and develop their business awareness and enterprise skills well through work experience and personal development days.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The school has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses and a long standing system for monitoring the work of teachers. This has recently been updated to give a sharper focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and motivation. This emphasis partially explains the improved results in English at the end of Year 9, and the improved provision for ICT. There is a current and appropriate focus on improving provision in sociology and religious education. Teachers generally plan lessons carefully for pupils of all abilities. The best lessons include a variety of engaging activities giving plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop and show what they know and can do. In other lessons teachers allow pupils to be too passive. The quality of marking and target setting varies. Overall it is satisfactory with a range from very good feedback related to level and grade criteria to comments unrelated to how to improve. A significant number of parents raised concerns about the quality and frequency of homework. These worries are well founded. The school recognises their validity and is about to implement a number of actions to address these concerns.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum for the main school and the sixth form is good. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully covered. Specialist status has had a positive impact on the range of courses offered, especially in mathematics. Pupils' needs and interests are met through a growing range of academic and work-related choices. Art and design courses, for example, now include possibilities to study ceramics or photography. There are very good links with local further education colleges to enhance the curriculum for vocationally minded pupils. These arrangements are typical of the efforts made to ensure that pupils stay in education rather than become disaffected by a curriculum that does not connect with their aptitudes or ambitions. The same is true of the outstanding inclusion centre with its emphasis on vocational skills. Individual interviews in Year 9 enable careful subject choices to be made. Pupils feel that they are well advised both for GCSE and sixth form courses. The school has a good programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship. There is a very good range of extra curricular opportunities, from performing arts to engineering, which enrich the conventional curriculum. Participation rates are high.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. They feel safe and well supported. They know who to go to if in difficulties, confident that they will receive help. Pupils can visit a counsellor on a drop-in basis or use a dedicated sanctuary area

as a refuge when in need. Pupils receive good induction programmes at each stage of their school life. There are close links with local primary schools to ensure easy transition to secondary school. Most pupils value the careers guidance they receive. The school has very effective links with a range of external agencies involved in promoting pupils' health, safety and welfare. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and arrangements for child protection are very thorough. A revised behaviour policy has improved pupils' attitudes and its implementation is constantly under review to ensure consistent and effective application of the praise and sanction system across the school. The school has good arrangements to guide and support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils with statements achieve as well as their peers. Across the school the use of assessment data to support pupils' learning is satisfactory and improving. However the best practice is not yet shared effectively.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is a dedicated leader, supported by an increasingly effective team of senior managers. Since the last inspection steps have been taken to deal with the issues identified but in several areas progress has been limited. Recent actions have been prompt and effective. The leadership team has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The quality of middle management varies. While some managers are very effective, others have had considerably less impact on ensuring the quality of provision they are responsible for. In both English and ICT weaknesses in subject leadership and teaching resulted in a significant number of pupils under performing in Year 11 in 2005. At the time, senior managers failed to identify these weaknesses promptly. Recent supportive action by senior management has led to improved progress in both subjects. The school is beginning to make better use of the most effective managers' expertise to spread good practice across the school. The school has a wealth of data available to enable its performance to be tracked and evaluated. There is some exemplary practice in the use of this data to track progress in a few areas, for example in science. However, although most managers now make good use of data, as yet it is not used systematically by all teachers. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Strategic development planning is sound. The key priorities for improvement that the school has identified are sharply focused and very apt. The intended outcomes and success criteria are generally sufficiently clear. Pupils generally feel that their views are listened to and acted on. Although a majority of parents feels that the school considers their views, a significant number do not. Specialist school status has had a positive impact on the work of the school and especially on standards in mathematics, but not as yet in ICT. There are strong, mutually beneficial links with partner primary schools in mathematics and ICT and in a wide range of other areas. Professional bodies such as the community police, mentoring and counselling support agencies are very positive about the links they have with the school. Governance overall is satisfactory. The governing body has a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but has not always held the school to account rigorously enough. Governors have ensured that the school

meets statutory requirements apart from the daily act of collective worship and the assessment of citizenship.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Dear Pupils As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your politeness, co-operation and assistance during our visit. We appreciated your comments and opinions. Your achievement is satisfactory, and particularly good in mathematics, but last year GCSE results were not as good as they could have been in English and ICT. You attend school regularly. Your behaviour is generally good and you told us that you enjoy coming to school. You also told us that you particularly enjoy the extra activities the school puts on at lunchtime and after school. Many of you join in with these activities. The care and guidance you receive from school are good and, in particular, the way teachers help you to develop personally is very effective. Although most of the teaching in your school is at least satisfactory and often good, you need to make better progress in some lessons. You told us that you learn best in lessons when your teachers make sure you are actively involved and we agree. Your teachers know you well but they also need to use all the data available to them to track your progress and to ensure you succeed. We agree with you and your parents/carers that arrangements for homework could be better. Your school is reviewing arrangements for homework currently and plans to make changes very soon. Your efforts to help others through charitable work and fundraising are good and this helps the school to be an important part of the community. We hope you continue this good work. Yours sincerely Philippa Francis HMI  
Lead inspector