



# Meole Brace School Science College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 123573  
**LEA** Shropshire  
**Inspection number** 281509  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** John Evans HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Longden Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Shrewsbury
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Shropshire SY3 9DW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01743 235 961
<b>Number on roll</b>	1174	<b>Fax number</b>	01743 364 017
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Adrian Burns
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ian Pringle

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281509
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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

This is a large comprehensive school with over 1,100 students, situated in a southern suburb of Shrewsbury. It serves the south of the town and surrounding rural areas. This represents a relatively affluent catchment area, but it also includes a few estates with more deprived social conditions. At six per cent, the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is average. The overwhelming majority of students are from White British backgrounds and only one per cent of students have English as an additional language. The proportion of boys is greater than girls in most years. Meole Brace is a specialist school for science.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The inspection confirms the school's own assessment that it is a good school. This is because it maintains a strong focus on continually finding ways to improve the quality of teaching and other forms of support for students so that they enjoy learning, make good progress and achieve high standards. A strong school ethos effectively encourages positive attitudes to learning and respect for others. Students really enjoy their school. These features are strongly supported by outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the school and together they ensure that students achieve well. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are well above average. 2004 saw a significant improvement in the standards achieved compared to those of the previous year. In 2005, standards have improved still further and evidence suggests that the good progress consistently made by middle and higher ability students is now shared more equally by lower ability students. Students with learning difficulties make good progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

The quality of provision is good. Teaching is effective in enabling students to learn well and make good progress in most subjects, although occasionally lessons are not planned and managed effectively. An increasingly broad curriculum meets the needs of most students well. Although students' personal development is good overall, their understanding of different cultures is not developed well in lessons. Many students participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities and extended services. Resources are deployed efficiently and the school makes the best of buildings created for a previous era. It provides very good value for money.

Good leadership and management ensure that standards are continually and rigorously monitored. Good use of data has increased managers' insight into how the school and individual subjects are performing. Initiatives to improve teaching and learning further are carefully paced and thoroughly implemented. Most subjects are well led, but the performance and leadership of some subjects require improvement. The school has continued to improve steadily since its last inspection and clearly has the capacity to continue to do so.

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

- Further develop the ability of all teachers to plan and manage lessons which meet the needs of the full range of students' abilities.
- Try to eradicate the extent to which difficult behaviour is allowed to disrupt learning in a minority of lessons.
- Develop the curriculum so that students have more opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of different cultures.
- Secure good leadership in all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good. From above-average levels of attainment on entry to the school, the great majority of students make at least good progress. Students meet the challenging targets set for them and standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average in Year 9 and Year 11. The significant improvement evident in both age groups between 2003 and 2004 has been sustained in 2005. Additionally, in 2005, the low proportion of students achieving no passes in their GCSE examinations, which had remained stubbornly static in recent years, has fallen for the first time. This reflects the school's initial success in addressing the under-achievement of some boys and some lower-attaining students, including students with learning difficulties. These issues were still evident in the analysis of the results in 2004. Students with learning difficulties make good progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology because they receive good support in these areas.

Students perform well in most other subjects. This is because the tracking of their individual progress is very good. It extends across all subjects and is rigorously checked by senior managers. Any under-achievement is quickly tackled so that students' learning is put back on track as soon as possible. The thorough and detailed analysis of all available data provides the school with good information about students' progress. It uses this very effectively to set suitably challenging targets at whole-school, year group, class and individual levels. All of this has a very positive effect on students' learning and overall achievement.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students is good and they really enjoy school. Students and their parents feel very positive about the way the school helps them develop.

Students generally behave well. They are relaxed and friendly with each other and incidents of bullying are few. Students' attitudes to their work and the respect shown towards staff and visitors are also good. The majority are punctual to lessons, and attendance, which is improving year on year, is good. The school is working in consultation with parents, staff and students to improve behaviour. An average number of pupils are excluded for short periods. The number was reduced by one third in the last year and the school is planning alternative arrangements.

Pupils are aware of what to do to keep healthy, because this is taught well in lessons. However, few students choose fruit or vegetables at lunchtimes. Students are keen to take advantage of the sport on offer and know how to keep fit. They also adopt safe practices in lessons and around the school. The way students contribute towards the school and wider community is good, and they are involved in supporting each other, influencing the work of the school and undertaking considerable charitable

work. Pupils are very well placed to succeed in the future because of their all-round achievement in academic, vocational, personal and basic skills.

Development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. They clearly have a well-developed moral understanding and are generally very mature and sociable. They develop a wide range of cultural skills through, for example, the performing arts. Their understanding of other cultures is less well developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, most students make good progress. Students with learning difficulties are taught extremely well in discrete groups and satisfactorily when in mainstream classes. Students say that they enjoy learning and are ably supported by well-qualified teachers. However, students studying ICT in Years 7 and 8 do not have teachers with sufficient expertise in the subject. This limits the progress they make. Teaching was recognised in the previous inspection as a major strength. The school has maintained this through improved assessment and target-setting procedures, the wider use of information and learning technology (ILT) and a greater emphasis on developing thinking skills. There is a strong emphasis on extending the range of teaching styles to match the variety of students' learning needs and students are involved in assessing and improving their own achievement. Managers know the strengths and weaknesses of teachers and make good efforts to make improvements. Lessons are mostly well ordered, but a minority are disrupted by difficult behaviour which some teachers do not deal with effectively. This mostly occurs in lessons involving lower-attaining groups. The best lessons are characterised by a good variety of activities which teachers manage at a fast pace so that students' interest is engaged throughout. However, in some lessons, there is not a wide enough range of activities to challenge students across the ability range. Teaching assistants are deployed well and give effective support to the small number of students who require it, enabling them to progress as well as other students.

Ideas for improving learning are actively sought and shared amongst staff, but the school recognises that they have to do more to tackle features of poorer teaching. Most teachers mark very well so that students understand exactly what they have to do to improve. Teachers are given a wide range of information on achievement to help monitor students' progress and they use it well. Particularly high standards are set in the school's specialist subjects of mathematics and science. For example, ILT is used imaginatively to promote learning and this good practice is shared within and beyond the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has a good range of appropriate courses and activities to enrich the lives of its learners. The curriculum meets the needs of most students through a broad range of academic and vocational programmes. Teachers' good use of data leads to a well-developed understanding of how they can improve students' learning. The school's specialist science status is celebrated by offering separate, dual award and vocational science courses. Fortnightly tutorial classes focus adequately on healthy lifestyles and work-related learning, but there is insufficient multi-cultural awareness amongst students. Good flexible learning programmes are available for a few students who combine schoolwork with courses in local colleges. The increasing choice of academic and vocational options courses reflects the good partnerships the school has with other schools and colleges. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. Pupils appreciate and participate well in a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports and performing arts, and they take good advantage of the extended services available.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support given to students are outstanding. Students are very well cared for and all statutory requirements for health, safety and child protection are fully met. One student said, with the obvious agreement of his peers, that the very best thing about the school is that, 'every teacher is very kind'. Older students are trained as mentors to prevent bullying and they all know what to do if they do not feel safe. The support for vulnerable students is outstanding and results in the rapid development of their academic and personal skills. The work undertaken in the learning support department is excellent and leads to some very good achievement, particularly in basic skills. However, this department does not have sufficient influence on classroom practice in mainstream subjects.

The school monitors the academic and personal progress of every student very well, and uses this information to set each student clear targets in every subject. As a result, students receive exceptionally good advice and guidance about their progress and what they need to do to improve. The school has an extremely well-developed system for helping older students choose the right courses and make decisions about their futures. There are strong and effective working links with other agencies such as health and social services. The views of students and parents are canvassed in wide-ranging ways and are taken very seriously. The school responds positively to the feedback received and has made changes as a result.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides calm, reflective and authoritative leadership and has strongly influenced a school ethos which engenders positive attitudes to learning and respect for individuals. The senior leadership team have a detailed, well-informed and very accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and this is reflected in the school's self-evaluation. Development plans for the school and for individual subjects have teaching and learning as their central focus. Wide-ranging initiatives are used to improve standards and these are carefully paced in order to protect existing strengths and ensure they are implemented effectively.

Governors give detailed consideration to many aspects of the school's performance and working arrangements and strike a good balance between providing school managers with support and challenge. Links between individual governors and specific aspects of the school's provision help to ensure governors can contribute from a more informed base. Opportunities to appoint new managers and teachers have been used very successfully to strengthen the school's performance. Resources are deployed efficiently and effectively, although areas of the original school building are too cramped.

Leadership and management of subjects have improved. Their quality remains too variable overall but leadership is strong in most subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Subject leaders now use a wide range of useful data to gain a better insight into performance in their subject and to target improvements more precisely. Evaluation of the impact of new initiatives is thorough and rigorous. It relies strongly on direct monitoring through a particularly extensive approach to the observation and assessment of lessons.

The school is active in a range of local partnerships through which it gains from, and contributes to, much sharing of good practice. This reflects a striking openness to new ideas and criticism, which characterises leadership and management at all levels. These attributes and the high and rising levels of achievement are evidence that the school's capacity to improve further is good.



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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>	2	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	1	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<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>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<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**

Meole Brace School Science College Longden Road Shrewsbury Shropshire NR22 4DH

4 November 2005

Dear Students,

A few weeks ago a small team of Ofsted inspectors visited your school. We met and talked to many of you and observed several of your lessons. We also met teachers and had many letters and a few telephone calls from parents. Throughout this process, you were helpful, friendly, courteous and open with us. We would like to thank you for that. Here are our main findings:

What is good about your school? •We feel Meole Brace is a good school. It has many strengths and one of its key strengths is you. We were very impressed by how much you enjoy going to school and enjoy the majority of your lessons. Generally your behaviour, attendance and positive attitude to learning are all very good. •The majority of lessons help you to learn well and make good progress. The best lessons have a good variety of activities and move at a fast pace. •Most of you achieve standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 which are much higher than the average. •The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for students. •The school is well led, as are most subjects, and lots of energy goes into making further improvements all the time.

Improvements we would like the school to make •Make sure that all lessons are planned so that all students, whatever their level of ability in the subject, find them interesting and challenging. •Prevent the difficult behaviour of a few pupils from disrupting learning in any lessons. •Develop the curriculum so that you have more opportunities to increase your knowledge and understanding of different cultures. •Make sure that all subjects are well led and managed.

The inspectors feel that the school is capable of improving further to become an outstanding one, and is already showing progress towards this.

We wish you well.

Yours sincerely,

John G Evans HMI