

# The Heath School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111400
<b>Local Authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	288952
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael McIlroy HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1048
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jane Ainsworth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Heather Mullaney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Clifton Road Runcorn Cheshire WA7 4SY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01928 576664
<b>Fax number</b>	01928 568703

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## Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement and standards in Key Stage 3; care guidance and support; and leadership and management. Information was gathered from senior staff, students, a representative of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner. Evidence was also gathered from lessons, the school's self-evaluation documentation, nationally published assessment data, information provided by the school and parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not accurate and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than most schools and serves an area of above average deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the number of students with statements of special educational need. The school is a Specialist Technology College for mathematics and science and holds a number of awards including the Inclusion Quality Mark and the Healthy School Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school with a number of outstanding features. The school's strengths lie in its outstanding leadership and management and the exceptional care, guidance and support it provides for its students. The curriculum and the personal well-being and development of students are also outstanding.

Key to the success of the school is the very clear sense of purpose and direction provided by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team. The headteacher's relentless drive to improve the school has resulted in an inclusive, calm and positive learning environment where students are well supported and strongly encouraged to succeed. A strong sense of teamwork and common purpose pervade the school. Leadership roles are well distributed. Each member of the senior leadership team oversees a clearly defined area of the school's work. The sense of common purpose also extends to middle managers who are very effective overall. Clear line management arrangements ensure that staff are supported but also held to account for their performance. The work of the school is regularly and robustly checked. Identified weaknesses, for example in teaching, are promptly addressed. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well, as is evidenced by its detailed and accurate self-evaluation. Very good links exist with outside agencies, other schools and colleges. A major factor in the development of these links is the thoughtful and effective use by the school of its specialisms in mathematics, science and technology. These have also been used effectively to improve liaison with primary schools, promote learning for groups of the more able students, develop links with subjects such as music and to run courses to help parents assist their children in their learning.

The school considers that the standards and achievement of students are good overall and inspection findings agree with this. Students enter the school with levels of ability that are broadly average. By the time they leave the school, all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have made well above average progress in their learning, due to their very good achievement in Key Stage 4. In 2005 and 2006, standards in this key stage were above average and the most recent examination results indicate they are now well above average. The proportion of students achieving the nationally expected five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE level has improved over the last three years and is well above average. The percentage of students achieving five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has also risen and is now above average. However, the progress made by students is not as fast in Key Stage 3 and the overall standards attained in this key stage have been well below average for a number of years. In 2004 and 2006, results in English were well below average, partly due to some discontinuity in staffing. Data provided by the school indicate that results in English have improved in 2007. Results in science have also been consistently well below average, partly due to the early entry of a large proportion of students to Key Stage 3 assessments.

Teaching is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and lesson objectives and new ideas are presented carefully. Consequently, students are clear about what they are expected to do. Resources, including video clips and interactive whiteboards are used well. The good use of questioning by teachers both supports and challenges students in whole class activities. Marking is regular and the whole-school 'strengths and targets' approach gives students a clear idea of how well they are learning as well as guidance on how to improve. Teachers regularly monitor the progress of learners and give support where necessary. A good range of strategies, including checking each other's work, enables students to evaluate their learning. Few

opportunities, however, were observed where students could explore and discuss ideas for themselves and learn from one another. The very good curriculum strongly supports students' learning and meets statutory requirements. It is very broad and includes subjects such as astronomy and psychology and innovative course units in science, such as forensics. A good level of homework is carefully linked to work in class. Provision for information and communication technology is very good. Enrichment is provided for the curriculum through a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Students' outstanding personal development and well-being contribute to the good overall progress which they make in their time at the school. The school has worked hard to improve attendance which is now good. Students thoroughly enjoy school. This is partly because of the very good relationships that exist between learners and adults which allow students to confidently approach staff with any concerns. One commented, 'We're like a big family.' Students feel safe in school and reported that any instances of bullying were dealt with swiftly and effectively. They are very well behaved and courteous and helpful to visitors. Students move sensibly and safely around the school. They listen well in lessons and work well together when asked to do so. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Assemblies, such as a student-led one on tackling bullying, focus on relevant themes. Students fully exploit opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. There is an elected school council and a Junior Leadership Team and other students act as monitors and as trained peer mentors to younger students. They raise funds for a wide range of charities and one group of students has produced art murals for a local hospital. Some students, under supervision, are able to exercise responsibility by leading dance classes.

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the school have strongly contributed to the safe and supportive learning environment. Risk assessments and arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust and are reviewed regularly. Careful arrangements to welcome new students ensure they settle quickly. Students are very well informed about future options in Key Stage 4 and when they leave school. The academic guidance students receive is excellent and they speak highly of the support they receive from teachers. Students are fully involved in planning and evaluating their progress against targets in each subject. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and are involved in academic review days. Procedures for tracking the progress of students are very good. Consequently, any underachievement is promptly identified and appropriate action is taken to ensure students achieve well by the end of their time in school. The school does all it can to remove barriers to learning for vulnerable students. The Centre for Student Intervention supports students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very effectively. Those at risk of exclusion receive very good support from the Behaviour Support Unit.

Governance is very good. Governors are well informed about the school's work. For example, the Inclusion Committee monitors the school's provision for vulnerable students. Governors also help develop students' personal development and well-being by inviting some to governors' meetings. They are supportive but also challenging of the school's leadership. Finances are well administered.

Parents who returned questionnaires were strongly supportive of the school's work although some would like more account to be taken of their views. The school provides very good value for money and, given its outstanding leadership and the strong improvements in Key Stage 4, has excellent capacity to improve further.

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

- Raise standards in English and science at Key Stage 3.
- Provide more opportunities in lessons for students to discuss and explore tasks for themselves and to learn from one another.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of The Heath School, Runcorn, WA7 4SY

Thank you for your help and very polite welcome when we inspected your school recently. I am writing to let you know what we found. We judged your school to be a good and improving school with a number of outstanding features. Here are some of the best things that we found.

- Your behaviour is excellent. You are courteous and helpful to visitors.
- Your attendance is good.
- You have very good opportunities to exercise responsibility.
- You are exceptionally well cared for and supported in school. You receive very good guidance from your teachers on how well you are doing in your work and how you can improve it.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher, governors and other school leaders is outstanding.
- The curriculum is excellent.
- You are well taught.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to change a few things in order to make your school even better. These are to:

- improve results in English and science at Key Stage 3
- provide you with more opportunities to discuss tasks among yourselves so that you can learn more from each other.

Once again, many thanks for your help and courtesy when we visited your school.