



Maidenhill School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115775
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290332
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector John English

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Kings Road
School category	Foundation		Stonehouse
Age range of pupils	11–16		GL10 2HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01453 822469
Number on roll (school)	727	Fax number	01453 825615
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Carol Trim
		Headteacher	Adrian Pearson
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	22–23 November 2006	290332

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Maidenhill School is smaller than the average secondary school, although numbers on roll have grown steadily over the past three years. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few pupils whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Maidenhill is a school that has lost its way since the last inspection when it was judged a good and improving school. It has not taken effective measures to consolidate or improve since that inspection and currently does not provide pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. There is widespread underachievement in many subjects. The governors have not acted to assess the performance of the school and arrest declining standards. The new headteacher has identified many of the school's weaknesses, and is taking appropriate measures to improve performance. He has not yet completed his review of all areas, so planning is not yet comprehensive enough to ensure rapid and secure improvement. Following recent retirements, the senior leadership team is under strength and does not have the capacity at present to drive forward the required improvements. In addition, leadership of subject departments varies from good to inadequate. Overall, leadership and management are inadequate.

Pupils' attainment when they join the school is broadly average, but when they leave in Year 11 standards are well below average. Consequently, the progress of the majority of pupils is insufficient and their achievement is inadequate. Through the good support they receive, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do better than their peers and make satisfactory progress. In some subjects, pupils achieve well because the quality of leadership and teaching in these departments is good. However, standards in other subjects vary considerably, and in many they are too low. Standards in English and mathematics are particularly low, and many pupils, especially average attaining pupils, are underachieving. Standards in science are below average, and achievement is not as good as it should be. Overall, teaching and learning are inadequate, because of the wide variations in different subjects.

The behaviour of the pupils overall is satisfactory, because, although many behave well, a minority have poor attitudes to work, often related to the quality of the teaching they receive. In the inspection questionnaire the majority of parents are supportive of the school, but one in three believes that behaviour is poor. One parent, expressing a view made by a number of others, wrote 'I feel that the time teachers have to spend on pupils who disrupt lessons impacts on the quality of the teaching and learning'. Inspectors saw a number of instances of this, but noted that behaviour in most classes was satisfactory and sometimes good.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most of the pupils enjoy school, especially because of their social friendships. However, too often this social interaction is allowed to continue in lessons, slowing the rate of learning. The pupils report some bullying, although most of them feel that the school deals effectively with cases as they arise. The majority of the pupils are physically fit and eat sensibly and well. They make a reasonable contribution to their school and the wider community, with the influence of the school's specialist status in the performing arts having a positive impact. They are satisfactorily prepared for many aspects of a successful future economic life, except for a lack of confidence in the key skills of numeracy and literacy.

The curriculum is satisfactory. In keeping with the school's specialist status there is an emphasis on the performing arts and on some good extra-curricular provision. The care and guidance given to the pupils is satisfactory. Teachers encourage and support the pupils in many ways, and vulnerable pupils in particular are well cared for. However, the support that teachers and mentors are able to give the pupils in improving their work is limited because the data about the levels at which the pupils are working are not accurate or detailed enough in many subjects.

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and pupils' achievement, especially for the average attaining pupils, in English, mathematics and science.
- Make better use of assessment information and monitor the school's provision systematically and rigorously to improve performance and standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the variations in standards in different subjects are markedly reduced.
- Significantly reduce the poor behaviour of the minority of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although the school has few higher attainers. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly in line with the average. In the GCSE examinations in 2005, standards were well below average overall, including the proportion of pupils who gained five or more grades A* to C. The results in 2006 were broadly similar. Pupils make insufficient progress between Year 7 and Year 11 and their achievement is inadequate. Those who do least well tend to be the average attaining pupils. However, the proportion of pupils who gain five or more grades A* to G has been high in recent years, showing that lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make better progress than their peers. Standards and progress vary considerably in different subjects. In English, mathematics and science, the pupils' achievement is inadequate. Achievement is good in design and technology and geography. The main causes of underachievement are the quality of the teaching, and the lack of accurate assessment information to identify and support individual pupils at risk of underachieving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school, particularly valuing their friendships with each other. They appreciate learning in those lessons where there are good opportunities for active learning. They enjoy the range of other activities provided by the school. Attendance is satisfactory but declining, especially in Year 11. The pupils behave well in most lessons but in some there is significant misbehaviour by a minority. Around the school the pupils are generally sensible but often boisterous in crowded areas. They feel safe and well protected while they are at school. They have a satisfactory awareness of healthy lifestyles and are pleased with the improved menus in the school canteen. Many make useful contributions to the life of the school and the community, particularly those who are members of year councils or the school council. They benefit from the guidance they receive about potential further study and the world of work. However, for too many, their literacy and mathematical skills are insufficiently developed, and this affects their confidence and the development of skills that will aid their future economic well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall is satisfactory. Cultural development has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection because of the influence of the school's specialist performing arts status.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. In some subjects, teaching and learning are good and occasionally outstanding, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT), geography, food technology and performing arts. Where there are opportunities for pupils to be active in lessons, they respond well and make good progress. However, in too many other lessons pupils do not make sufficient progress. This is because teachers, when they set the pupils tasks, do not explain clearly enough what it is that the pupils should understand and learn from doing them. As a result, pupils work without a clear purpose, and the pace of learning is too slow. In too many lessons, excessive teacher input limits the amount of active involvement of pupils in their learning. Opportunities are limited for pupils to discuss ideas in a structured way to develop their thinking and in many lessons they are given too much licence to pursue their own social discussions. At the end of lessons, pupils are rarely encouraged to reflect on what has been learnt. Too few teachers make clear to pupils how to move their learning forward. For example, exercise books show very little evidence of marking that explains the level at which the pupils are working or what they should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on the performing arts, in keeping with the specialist status of the school. In Years 7 to 9 this has led to the inclusion of dance and drama for all pupils. Overall, in Years 10 and 11, the pupils can select options to match their interests and needs. There are satisfactory opportunities to study vocational and work-related courses in partnership with other institutions, and this provision is being expanded. The pupils receive good careers guidance in preparation for the world of work and further education. The pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT is not planned carefully enough in subjects across the curriculum. There are wide and varied opportunities for enrichment activities, especially in the arts, with good levels of participation. Specialist college status has done much to widen the breadth of extra-curricular provision and firmly establish the school as a strong focus in the community. It supports the pupils in their aspirations and adds enjoyment to their time in school. The school promotes pupils' health education effectively within the curriculum and citizenship is well taught.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are satisfactory. The school's arrangements for child protection meet requirements and pupils say they feel safe. The school responds robustly to incidents of bullying and unacceptable behaviour, but some pupils and parents are rightly concerned about the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils and its impact on learning. The recently established internal exclusion centre is an effective resource to manage poor behaviour, and it is beginning to have a positive impact. The school works hard to secure satisfactory attendance. Pupils receive helpful guidance on option choices. Information on alternative routes when they leave school is good and helps to raise their aspirations. Termly assessments of pupils' current performance are followed by informative meetings with parents which they clearly value. Pupils in all years have regular mentoring sessions with their tutor where suggestions as to how to improve are discussed. However, in many subject areas, the assessment of pupils' performance is not based on secure data, so these processes are not fully effective. Some subject areas set challenging targets and effectively monitor the progress of pupils towards them. In others, the practice is not yet rigorous enough. However, care is taken to identify vulnerable pupils and a range of effective support is provided, with good links to outside agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. However, the new headteacher is having a positive impact on the school. He has identified many key weaknesses and is putting in place the structures and processes to rectify them. These include a sharp focus on

raising standards, and using data to identify underachievement and to analyse trends in performance to plan for improvement. He has not yet had sufficient time to make a comprehensive review of all aspects of the school's performance, as a result of which planning is not yet secure enough to ensure lasting impact in raising standards. The senior managers' current assessment of the school's performance is inaccurate. In every area of its work the school judged the quality to be better than the inspection evidence would support. The widely differing management practices of subject leaders result in unacceptable variations in the standards of performance in their subjects. In addition, the senior leadership team is two members of staff short, and therefore does not yet have the capacity to manage the required improvements. For a number of years the governors have been unaware of falling standards as they did not obtain the information required to monitor effectively the performance of the school. Consequently, they failed to take action to improve the situation. However, they have recently begun to exercise this function and are developing appropriate structures and practices. Finances are well managed. The school does not offer value for money, as it is failing to ensure that the pupils receive an acceptable standard of education.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and would like to thank you for helping us with our work, particularly those of you who gave up your free time to talk to us. We appreciated hearing your views.

We know that many of you take part in and enjoy the wide range of out-of-school activities, and that you respond well to opportunities to help out in school and to work in your local community. However, too many of you are not making enough progress in your lessons. This is particularly true in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, where standards are much lower than they should be. Much of this is because in many lessons you do not take an active enough part. You need to be told more clearly what exactly you should be learning when you are set the various tasks you do in lessons, so that you feel more involved and know why you are doing them. When your books are marked you need more information about the standard you are reaching, and how you can make your work better.

Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school, but a minority of you do not. In some lessons this disrupts the progress of the majority. Some pupils do not treat others with enough care and courtesy and there is some bullying, although you say that the teachers deal quickly and effectively with this when you tell them about it.

Because of the poor progress many of you are making in some subjects, we have decided that your school needs additional support to help it improve. This means that inspectors will continue to visit your school and will be looking to see how well things are improving. They will be looking at the standards you are achieving, particularly in English, mathematics and science, and the behaviour of those who are disrupting the learning of the majority. They will want to know how all your teachers are working with you to help the school improve. We are sure that you will want to do your best to help your teachers provide you with the very best possible education so that you do well in your future lives.