

Moulton School and Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122055
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	292308
Inspection date	24 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Bob Roberts HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1306
6th form	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Otley
Headteacher	John Woodhead
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	Pound Lane Moulton Northampton NN3 7SD
Telephone number	01604 641600
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Moulton School and Science College is a larger than average school on the northern boundary of Northampton, serving the village of Moulton and other surrounding villages, and drawing some pupils from the town itself. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion with learning difficulties is below average. The school was designated as a specialist science college in 2002 and was re-designated successfully in March 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Moulton School and Science College is providing a satisfactory standard of education. Some aspects of its work are good. It is a popular school and one which has shown that it can identify and address areas for development. These processes can be too slow and are not always effective. However, pupils are happy at the school and most of them make the progress they should.

Levels of attainment are high. Most pupils arrive with above average levels of attainment from their junior schools. They make broadly satisfactory progress, although the rate of progress is clearly faster in Years 7-9 than it is in Years 10 and 11. The standards pupils reach at the age of 14 and in their GCSEs are above average, but some groups of pupils, notably the more able ones, do not reach the levels they should. In the sixth form, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and the standards they reach are very much in line with national averages.

Becoming a science specialist school has been beneficial for the pupils. Science features strongly in the ethos of the school, the range of science courses available is broader than might otherwise be expected, and teaching has benefited from the extra resources for information and communication technology. Continuing problems with staffing have meant that the school has not been able to improve the standards in science and related subjects as it would have hoped, but there are some strong features.

The personal development of pupils is good. Attendance is well above average. Those pupils that inspectors spoke to clearly enjoy school and they appreciate the excellent facilities and pleasant learning environment. They are aware of the many opportunities open to them outside the classroom, especially in sport and the arts, and a high proportion take advantage of these. Pupils feel safe and secure, and they behave well. They make a good contribution to the local community. The school has a well-developed culture of enterprise and work-related learning, and pupils are well prepared for adult life.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is some specialism in science, but not more than might be expected for a well-established specialist school. Although there is some good teaching, the quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. The school has had some staffing difficulties in recent years and teaching does not sufficiently challenge or stretch the more able pupils. The quality of care and support that pupils receive, particularly through the house system, is good.

In the questionnaire that accompanied the inspection, most parents, were positive in their views of the school. However, there is a marked degree of dissatisfaction with a number of aspects of the school's work, including the school's communication with parents and its responsiveness to the views of pupils and parents. Accountability for and monitoring of performance needs to be strengthened and the links between the senior leadership team and middle managers need to be more consistent and challenging.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is satisfactory. A large proportion of the main school pupils enter the sixth form and numbers are swelled by students coming from other institutions. Students benefit from the very wide range of Advanced level courses available to them and there is some Level 2 provision. The range available is enhanced by well-established consortium arrangements. Students benefit from excellent facilities. There are thorough systems to monitor, guide and support students and a high proportion of them progress to higher

education. Overall, the progress students make is in line with national expectations. Attainment, as measured by the average number of points that students acquire for university entrance purposes, is high. This is a result of the high average number of exam entries, including general studies. The average attainment for each exam entry is in line with expectations. However, the progress that female students make is below what it should be and their attainment levels are consequently significantly lower than those achieved by male students. This disparity varies across subject areas. The personal development of students in the sixth form is good, although opportunities are missed for students to develop more by being involved with the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards further by improving the quality of teaching and learning with particular regard to meeting the needs of the more able pupils.
- Develop more effective ways of communicating with parents and responding to the views of pupils and parents.
- Implement more consistent and rigorous ways in which the senior leadership team monitors and evaluates the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The inspection findings support the school's own view that achievement is satisfactory overall. National data, year on year, suggest that pupils make satisfactory progress from the age of 11 to 14. Progress in English is markedly inferior to that in mathematics and especially to that in science, in which it is very good. At this stage, boys are making better progress than girls, but all groups are making the progress they should. The data which measures progress from 11 to 16 indicate that, although broadly in line with expectations, there are significant areas of concern. Progress in English is relatively poor. Pupils with learning difficulties have made satisfactory progress, but the more able pupils have made below expected progress. In the 2005 results, this applied more particularly to boys, but the 2006 results suggest that is the case for both boys and girls. The school is aware of these issues and has put in place measures to address them. Importantly, this is against a backcloth where the actual attainment levels are high. Standards in the national tests at the age of 14 are above average in mathematics and science. Although pupils have not made sufficient progress in a number of subjects at GCSE, the key overall indicators are all above average. In addition, since the last inspection, the school has improved the outcomes for less able pupils: in 2006, all pupils achieved at least one GCSE and the proportion achieving five or more passes was 98% against a national average of 92%.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

At the last inspection, the behaviour and attitudes to school of a minority of pupils were unsatisfactory. A number of strategies have been implemented that have effectively dealt with this issue and the school has become more inclusive in its practice and ethos. Although some parents disagree that behaviour is good, inspectors saw no misbehaviour, and exclusion figures have reduced substantially in the last two years. Attendance figures are well above national averages. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although the school

is not providing a daily act of collective worship. In its own self-evaluation, the school presents little convincing evidence regarding its preparation of pupils for an ethnically and culturally diverse society. There is a clear commitment towards promoting health, which is shown, for example, by the appointment of a school nurse in September 2006. The new catering contract contains stipulations regarding healthy food, but pupils are not yet particularly responsive to this. The house system, breaking down further into its small family units, provides very well for pupils' security and emotional development. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the community, with a very wide range of charity activities, a council structure that is contributing significantly to school improvement and a prefect system.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school regards the quality of its teaching as good, whereas the inspection found it to be satisfactory overall. Staffing problems, caused by a mixture of factors beyond the school's control, have affected teaching quality and, consequently, achievement, particularly in English and science. The teaching seen by inspectors in the main school was satisfactory but was not fully meeting the range of needs in some classrooms. Where there were weaknesses, there was insufficient challenge and stimulation, and pupils were not strongly engaged in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting the needs of most pupils. The school has been involved in piloting a new science course in recent years - Science for the Twenty-First Century - and pupils can follow separate science GCSE courses. Business courses are popular in Years 10 and 11, although there are few opportunities to study other vocational subjects. There are some good aspects to the curriculum; for example, work-related learning opportunities, such as enterprise activities, are good, as is the provision for information and communication technology. Extra-curricular opportunities are a strength of the school, with frequent visits and trips, and strong traditions in sport and the arts. Targeted support for the more able pupils has until recently been insufficient. It is becoming more focussed and purposeful, although ways of supporting and challenging more able pupils in the classroom are not sufficiently embedded.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides an environment in which pupils feel secure. The well-established house system is at the heart of the good care and support that pupils receive. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties was a weakness at the last inspection, but this is now good, and these pupils make the progress they should. Good support is provided for vulnerable pupils. The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet current government requirements. The school has a system in place to set targets for pupils and to monitor their progress although, at a subject level, the departments in the school monitor pupils' progress in different ways.

Pupils say they receive good feedback on their progress and that their work is marked, but the current systems do not always identify or support sufficiently those pupils who are underachieving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school's leadership and management overall is satisfactory. Since its last inspection, there have been some improvements. The achievement levels of the less able boys, for example, were an issue that has been addressed effectively. The school has shown the capacity to identify weaknesses openly and address them. Decisions are made on the basis of appropriately gathered information. There are strong links with a wide range of partners, and these are generally well managed. Governance is good and the school successfully achieved re-designation for its science specialist status. The school's leadership rightly took the view that, in the light of some of the progress issues for some pupils, that leadership and management should only be regarded as satisfactory. Inspectors concur with this view, and would apply the same reasoning to the sixth form, where standards and progress are satisfactory. Furthermore, the rigour with which the school monitors and evaluates its work at all levels needs to be strengthened. Links between the leadership team and departments and faculties are inconsistent and consequently ineffective. The school's judgements on the quality of teaching are too generous. The school itself is aware of some of these management issues and plans are in preparation to address them.

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Annex A

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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

25 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Moulton School and Science College, Northampton NN3 7SD

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First of all, however, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your friendliness and cooperation during our visit.

The inspection found much of which the school can be proud. There is a positive and happy atmosphere at the school. Your staff - both teachers and support staff - are very committed to their work and to your care and guidance. It is clear that you enjoy school, both from talking to you and from the school's attendance figures. Many of your parents responded to the questionnaire that was used as part of the inspection and the majority were supportive of the school. Most of you behave well, and the ways in which you contribute to the life of the school are excellent. Being a specialist school has obviously had benefits for you and the local community. Large numbers of you take advantage of the many opportunities, especially in sport and the arts.

The academic progress you make at the different levels of the school is satisfactory. Standards are high in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. We do take the view that the most able pupils should be doing even better than they are in the main school, and female students in the sixth form should also be making better progress. There are some other areas where the school can develop. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but could improve further. The ways by which the school manages and checks all that is going on need to be more stringent, and the school needs to communicate with and respond to parents more effectively. I am sure that the staff at the school will be able to meet these challenges.

Our view is that you attend an effective school, with excellent facilities in a pleasant environment. Many of you are well aware of this. The school has potential for further improvement and you can all contribute to that.

I wish you all well for the future.

Bob Roberts HMI