



# Maryhill High School - A Media Arts College

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 124405  
**Local Authority** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 292985  
**Inspection dates** 29–30 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** David Anstead HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Gloucester Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Kidsgrove
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Stoke-on-Trent ST7 4DL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 296751
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	839	<b>Fax number</b>	01782 296771
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	78	<b>Chair</b>	G Finney
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Headteacher</b>	A Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2001		

---

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	29–30 November 2006	292985

---

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Maryhill High School is an 11–18 school of just below average size. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a much lower proportion than the national average. The school is in its third year of designation as a specialist media arts college. The number of students in the sixth form is relatively small and provision is shared with a neighbouring school. The headteacher took up post in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. Students enjoy their time there and are appreciative of the after school activities they can choose to participate in. They are well cared for and feel safe. There are good opportunities for students to help others in the community. The views of parents and students are regularly sought and the students have a say in the running of their school through the student council. The school's accommodation is bright and welcoming. It is in good decorative order and the facilities are treated responsibly by students. Specialist media status is used to good effect in providing static and video displays of students' work around the school.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory choice of academic and vocational courses. Past difficulties over shared provision with partner institutions have now been resolved. The quality of teaching and learning varies widely from outstanding to inadequate. The school is well aware of where teaching is strong and where it needs to improve. Senior leaders are actively supporting weaker teaching in improving to match the best practice elsewhere and this is beginning to have an impact. Marking of students' work is inconsistent with some not having been assessed for a considerable period of time. Consequently, in some lessons, students do not have clear guidance on what they need to do to improve and teachers do not plan work appropriately matched to students' previous achievements. However, students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

GCSE examination results show a good improvement from the previous year. The proportion of students attaining five GCSE's at A\*– C increased from 44% in 2005 to 55% in 2006 to be just below the national average. There were similar good improvements in English and mathematics, subjects important to students' future economic well-being. However, in science standards fell and achievement was below average.

Information available to the school shows that around three quarters of sixth formers achieve standards below or well below those their prior attainment at GCSE suggests they should reach. Standards are exceptionally low and the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is inadequate. The sixth form is relatively small and represents a small proportion of all students. Accordingly, although in the sixth form achievement and standards are inadequate, in the school overall they are judged to be satisfactory.

The headteacher and newly created senior leadership team are beginning to get to grips with the problems the school faces. Effective development of teaching and learning in some subjects and the rising trend in main school examination results demonstrate the school has the capacity to bring about improvement in science and in the sixth form. Governors, however, have failed to recognise the extent of underachievement in the sixth form and the current difficulties in science. Consequently, although they are supportive of the school, they are not challenging it sufficiently to improve.

Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

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

### **Grade: 4**

Students are very positive about their sixth form but are not given enough opportunity to enjoy sport and fitness regularly, something they feel very strongly about. They enjoy being enterprising and some are making good progress towards the world of higher education and employment. However, most students are substantially underachieving.

Achievement in many subjects is often poor because students have not been well enough guided in their choices of study. Some are pursuing inappropriate courses. The school's expectations of students are low. Students frequently give up on courses or are making insufficient effort. They take on too much outside work, becoming disengaged with school life. Whilst students feel that teachers care for their well-being, they also accurately diagnose what is wrong in the teaching of some of their subjects. Some teachers are working outside their individual areas of expertise whilst others make inadequate plans for lessons. Students say that where this is the case lessons lack pace and clear objectives or that work is not mature enough for them. However, teaching in some subjects is far more inspiring. In these lessons, students benefit from highly effective planning, challenging tasks and exciting debate. Students would like to enjoy these experiences in more of their subjects.

The choice open to students in the sixth form is too heavily biased towards the academic subjects. There are insufficient vocational opportunities. The school has not addressed the lack of provision for religious education which was identified as a key issue at the last inspection. The school is planning to improve teaching through a programme of training and sharing of good practice. This initiative has been too slow in delivering improvement and achievement remains inadequate.

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

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by improving the overall quality of teaching and guidance to students.
- Raise achievement in science by improving the quality of teaching.
- Ensure the consistent use of assessment to inform students how to improve and to enable teachers to better plan work matched to students' starting points.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

Attainment on entry is broadly average. Students make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 except in mathematics where progress is good. Standards in the national

tests at the end of Year 9 are broadly average. They are exceptionally high in mathematics at this point. Students continue to make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4 except in science. Standards in GCSE examinations are now broadly average overall. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Achievement in science was satisfactory in the 2005 national tests. Since then the school has experienced staffing turbulence and recruitment difficulties in this subject. Some parents and students are concerned at a decline in the quality of teaching and the disruptive behaviour of a minority during science lessons. The school is aware of the issue and has arranged external consultancy support as well as ensuring a senior staff presence in science every day. There is no evidence as yet that the decline has been reversed. Students are currently underachieving in science at Key Stage 4.

Compared to other school sixth forms, students on average achieve a grade lower in their A levels than their prior attainment indicates they are capable of. Achievement was inadequate in the sixth form in 2005 and declined further in 2006. Consequently, standards at A level are exceptionally low. Achievement is satisfactory in the main school, except in science.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Personal development and well-being of students are good. Most students enjoy school and feel safe. Attendance is just above average. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and the school deals with them promptly and effectively. Racist incidents are very rare. Behaviour overall is satisfactory. It is good around the school and in most lessons; however, in a significant minority of lessons it is unsatisfactory and affects the quality of learning. This occurs most often in those lessons where the teaching is inadequate. The school effectively encourages students to adopt healthy lifestyles. The benefits of healthy eating are well emphasised, although the presence of an ice cream van on campus sits uneasily with the good work being done in this area. Physical exercise is encouraged through physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities. The school has provided a bicycle shed and cycle path which has increased the number of students cycling to school. The personal, social and health education programme includes guidance on such topics as drugs, smoking, sex education and other topics affecting health. Students make a strong contribution to the community through the various charitable activities which they organise; for example, the senior citizens Christmas lunch, by Year 9 students, and the harvest festival, organised by Year 10, during which over two hundred food parcels were delivered. Students are well prepared for the world of work both through the academic curriculum and through such activities as work experience, enterprise programmes, and good careers guidance. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good in all four areas. Assemblies always include a prayer or time for reflection. Moral issues are explored in many areas of the curriculum. The school council is an effective forum and gives students the opportunity to take responsibility and gain experience of the democratic

process. Awareness of other cultures is well developed in many areas of the curriculum such as religious education where students study other faiths.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but inadequate in science and in some sixth form lessons. Almost all lessons are given purpose by sharing learning objectives with students, although these are not often pitched at levels which accurately meet the range of individual needs. In the majority of lessons, teachers provide a range of activities and approaches that maintains students' interest, with the result that they behave well and work hard. Year 8 pupils said that they like school because the lessons are so interesting. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used widely, with some teachers making effective use of interactive whiteboards. However, in a minority of classes, mainly in science, teachers struggle to engage students. This results in unsatisfactory behaviour and inattention from students who become disaffected. Most teachers encourage students by marking work thoughtfully with comments that inform them of their standards, praise good effort and point towards improvement. Reports by students and parents of instances where work has not been marked for a considerable time were confirmed by inspectors scrutinising exercise books. In such instances students are less motivated and so make less progress. Many students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants and so make good progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

The school curriculum offers a satisfactory range of subjects and courses. Students are able to choose from both vocational and academic options. Specialist status funding has enabled developments in the use of media and its technologies across many areas of the school. It has led to work with feeder schools, links with charities and the production of regular newspapers. Training of students in the use of broadcast media has begun; developments in extra-curricular activities associated with media status include the production of DVDs for assembly by the school council. Within lessons, such as in mathematics, some teachers use specialist technology very creatively. In others students say they sometimes need to help teachers use specialist media technology. The impact of specialist status is satisfactory. Progression through the school curriculum is well managed. Students enjoy a satisfactory range of out of school activities. There is a lively and much appreciated range of productions, choirs and an orchestra.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

The quality of care, guidance and support for students is good, with particular strengths in care and support. Systems to ensure the safety of students are robust. The pastoral system is effective in monitoring the welfare and progress of students. Teachers have good information on progress made by individuals and this is used effectively to target extra support where it is needed. This is particularly effective in helping students with learning difficulties and disabilities to make good progress. The team of learning support assistants is well deployed with the majority of support being given in the classroom. Guidance is sound, but is a weakness in the sixth form and some marking of books is inadequate.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Although formal self-evaluation of its performance by the school is inadequate, the new headteacher and leadership team demonstrated in discussions with inspectors that they have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have used this to set a clear direction for the school but this has yet to lead to improvements in achievement in the sixth form and in science. School improvement planning is firmly based on the contributions of senior and middle managers so that there is unity of vision throughout. Monitoring of the school's performance is satisfactory. Senior leaders have begun to have an impact in improving teaching and learning. This has been particularly successful in mathematics where results have improved dramatically. The school has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. Progress on dealing with issues from the last inspection has been inadequate in some areas but satisfactory in others. Differences remain in performance between subjects and key stages. The sixth form still has no religious education and the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not in place. However, in other areas some progress has been made, particularly in the use of data to inform curriculum planning, and in the creation of systems to provide teachers and students with information to track progress.

Governors are supportive of the school but are not sufficiently aware of the extent of underachievement in the sixth form. Consequently, they have not challenged the school to set out formally how it will improve the sixth form, nor have they been able to monitor its progress in doing so. Governance is therefore inadequate.

Government expectations on ensuring that teachers have an appropriate work–life balance have been met. There are satisfactory partnerships with outside family support services and other institutions. Parents' views are sought and used so that they support the school's work. Resources are matched to priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The school provides satisfactory value for money.



**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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## 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>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### 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	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	4

<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.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	4
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	4
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	4	
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**

Following our visit to inspect your school, I am writing to tell you about our findings. I would like to thank those of you we spoke to for the friendly welcome you gave us. The inspection team would particularly like to congratulate the sixth form young enterprise team who succeeded in selling us some of the excellent Christmas cards they had made!

Your thoughtful responses to our questions helped us decide what is good about your school and what needs to be improved. The education you receive at your school is satisfactory overall.

These are the strengths of your school.

- You enjoy coming to school and you feel safe there.
- The school cares for you well and helps you make good progress in your personal development.
- The school prepares you well for your future economic well-being.
- You make satisfactory progress in most subjects.

There are some aspects of the school's work which we think can be better. The progress made by many of you in science is not as good as in other subjects. In the sixth form the majority of students are underachieving. I have asked your headteacher to improve the progress you make in science and the sixth form by improving the teaching and by making sure your work is marked. You can help by following the guidance teachers give you on how to improve. Inspectors may visit the school again to check on its progress.

I wish you every success in the future.