

Mount Grace High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120240
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	302307
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	598
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Herbert
Headteacher	J R Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Leicester Road Hinckley LE10 1LP
Telephone number	01455 238921
Fax number	01455 890677

Age group	11-14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This middle school is of average size, serving part of the town of Hinckley. It is a popular choice and has grown in recent years. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is lower than average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

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 school. Good leadership and management have led to a number of improvements in provision and in pupils' achievement since the time of the last inspection and more recently. The headteacher and members of the senior leadership team have seized the opportunities presented by the re-modelling of the school's workforce to structure an organisation that better meets the needs of the modern school. In so doing, leaders have kept staff well informed and have inspired their commitment to the change. This effective focus on improvement and the maintenance of a positive climate within the school indicate that the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

Pupils' achievement is good and they reach above average standards. Teaching is good, with some which is outstanding. Training has effectively focused on developing assessment. Systems for setting an individual pupil's targets and tracking progress towards them have improved considerably. Departments are beginning to use these systems well. However, the quality of feedback given to pupils in the marking of work is not always as helpful as it could be. Good and outstanding practice is shared well across the school, leading to further improvements. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan a sufficient range of challenging activities for the different abilities in the class, especially for the more able pupils. In English the effect of staff absence has restricted some pupils' progress. This issue is being resolved by the school and the department's new leadership has already made some improvement to the provision made.

The good curriculum is well planned and reinforces pupils' good personal development and well-being. Central to this is the key skills programme. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of these lessons very much, and value the contribution made by visiting speakers. Pupils make very positive relationships with staff and their learning profits from this. They have a good willingness to learn. As one parent said, 'My children are confident, independent-minded people happy with their school work and their friends'.

Good care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe and are protected. A number of successful new initiatives to support vulnerable pupils and those with behaviour problems are contributing to improved behaviour and attitudes. A small number of pupils who have failed in other schools have managed to complete their education successfully at Mount Grace. The support for pupils is enhanced by the extensive partnerships which the school makes with other organisations. These contribute to particularly effective arrangements for transition from primaries and to the upper school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified before arriving in school and strong links are made with parents to support the transfer. Parents have a very positive view of the school's work, as shown in their responses to the inspection's questionnaires, which were overwhelmingly positive

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of the feedback given to pupils in marking on their work and progress.
- Plan all lessons to ensure that all pupils are stretched as far as possible, particularly the most able.
- Ensure greater consistency in pupils' progress in English by further consolidating improvements to the quality of provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They reach above average standards by the end of Year 9 from a broadly average starting point in Year 7. The rate of some pupils' progress in English has been restricted by staff absence, although improvements made to provision are now producing more consistency in the progress made by these pupils. There have been improvements since the last inspection in subjects where progress was then unsatisfactory. Progress is now good in design and technology and in information and communication technology (ICT) and is now satisfactory in art. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effectiveness of support which they receive. The small number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress in learning the language, benefiting from additional support.

The quality of information on pupils' progress has improved substantially since the last inspection and departments are using it more effectively. This has highlighted strengths and weaknesses in departments more clearly. As a result, action is being taken at department level and this has led to improvements in pupils' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school very much and the majority respond well in lessons. They know and respect the sanctions and rewards used to promote good behaviour. Pupils work safely and responsibly. They are considerate of others and work collaboratively in lessons and during break times. Attendance is average and the school is working to improve this. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and enhanced particularly through the key skills programme and by assemblies. Pupils regard this as 'a lesson they really enjoy and look forward to each week'. They enjoy the opportunities to discuss ethical issues in geography and religious education. The development of future economic well-being is only satisfactory because, although workplace skills are fostered well through many subject areas, not all pupils have had the opportunity to fully develop their literacy skills to support this. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the fund-raising they do for charity and their involvement in the wider community is good. Pupils report that they had been 'given lots of new things' as a result of the student survey and considered themselves to be 'very lucky'. They are appreciative of the traversing wall and the table-tennis tables, which are well used at break times and encourage good healthy lifestyles. Pupils are happy at school and those in Year 9, whilst looking forward to moving on, say that they are sad to be leaving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The general standard of teaching is good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and plan lesson activities in detail. Lesson objectives are presented clearly and teachers have high expectations concerning the quantity and quality of work. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge of subject-specific technical language. Learning assistants are used well. On occasions planning does not provide a sufficient range of learning tasks that fully challenge all pupils, especially the most able. Pupils are set appropriate targets for all subjects

and their progress is checked through regular assessment. Action is taken to support those pupils who fall behind. Useful homework is set regularly. Marking is not consistently well used as a means of advising pupils on how work could be improved and individual targets reached. ICT is used well in some subject areas, although its use is not widespread because of the limited availability of projectors and interactive whiteboards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets national requirements and has many good features. The careful use of setting helps meet pupils' varying learning needs. Pupils have a choice of foreign languages and there is good provision for music. The key skills programme helps pupils acquire skills and knowledge relevant for further study and helps them develop good safety and health awareness. The time allocated to art is restricted because it forms part of the technology programme. The curriculum is enhanced with a rich and varied programme of additional activities, including visits at home and abroad, visiting speakers and activities to widen pupils' horizons such as the annual history days for Years 7 and 8. Pupils participate in many voluntary activities, including drama, sports and opportunities to support charities. The junior sports leader programme has resulted in some pupils working towards a qualification. Participation in projects such as those to welcome new pupils, enterprise challenges, and working in the library give pupils good opportunities to develop responsibility. Provision for ICT is limited and this in turn limits pupils' opportunities to use it throughout the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its students. Pupils take advantage of a range of support systems which are in place to help with any problems they may have. Their progress towards targets is tracked well, although in some areas they do not always receive regular feedback on what they need to do to improve. Procedures for tracking attendance are in place but are not yet ensuring the improvement that the school would like to see in this area. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well developed and as a result they make good progress. A range of activities is provided to help them to address their personal challenges, for example, raising self-esteem and increasing confidence, and pupils speak highly of this provision. The school works well with parents, with reports provided every term giving detailed feedback on pupils' progress. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and protection are good. Thorough risk assessments are carried out across the site on a regular basis. Pupils are well guided in personal safety and future career opportunities through the key skills programme.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have provided clear leadership for the school, bringing about substantial improvements since the previous inspection. Monitoring procedures are good. Recent changes to the roles of the senior leadership team have strengthened its effectiveness in checking on the work of the school and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. The development of the use of data in school by senior leaders has ensured that departments can now more easily identify areas for development. Effective systems for setting targets for pupils and tracking their progress have been put in place. The quality of provision in weaker

departments has been improved, as has pupils' achievement in those subjects. This has included tackling some difficult challenges, including improving the quality of leadership and provision in the English department.

The school reviews its work thoroughly, with each department fully involved in developing the whole-school improvement plan. As a result there is a shared understanding of strengths in the school and areas for improvement. Clearly presented information is shared with all staff and they have a good understanding of the school's priorities for development. Senior staff ensure that there is effective developmental support for staff. Good practice is shared very well within the school, for example, physical education has shared its very good assessment practice. Middle leaders take responsibility for checking the work of their departments through their use of data and lesson observation. Some do not keep a close enough check on the quality of feedback provided by staff when marking pupils' work. As a result, pupils do not always receive sufficient guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. Governors are well informed and fulfil their responsibilities well.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mount Grace High School, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1LP

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. Thank you for sharing your views of the school with us.

We would like to share our main findings with you:

- Mount Grace High School is a good school.
- The school is well run by the headteacher, governors and other staff and is improving as a result.
- You make good progress in your work and reach standards which are above average because of good teaching. However, in English, some of you have been affected by your teacher's absence. We were pleased to see that this has now been sorted out and that your work is now improving.
- You develop good personal qualities and the many activities provided help you to do this. You like the variety in the good curriculum which you have. You say that you find key skills helpful and that you enjoy the wide range of additional activities provided.
- Staff care for you well and give you good support when you need it. You find their guidance helpful. Your relationships with teachers and each other are good.

There are some things which the school needs to do to make your time there even better:

- Provide you all with harder challenges at times so that you can reach even higher standards in your work.
- Provide you with clearer feedback when marking your work in all subjects so that you know what you have done well and what you need to do to improve.
- Go on making sure that the improvements in English get even better.

I am sure your teachers will let you know how you can help with these improvements.

Ruth Westbrook Lead Inspector