

Meols Cop High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104956
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	308718
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth James HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	596
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr M Fearn
Headteacher	Miss Alison Heaton
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Meols Cop Road Southport Merseyside PR8 6JS
Telephone number	01704 531180
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Meols Cop High School is a comprehensive school in Southport. It is smaller than average and most students are of White British heritage. The number of students whose first language is not English is small, but it has grown significantly within the last two years. The proportion of students who are eligible to receive free school meals is above average. A slightly higher than average number of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion with statements of special educational need is high. There are two specialist units, one for students with Asperger's syndrome and the other for students with dyslexia. A relatively large proportion of students join the school other than at the start of Year 7 and leave the school other than at the end of Year 11. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award, the Arts Mark silver award and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Meols Cop High School is a good school which provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its students. The school's culture fosters the development of positive relationships and provides an environment conducive to mutual respect.

Students enter the school with below average attainment. They make good progress and leave with average qualifications. Examination results improved significantly in 2007, but attainment in English and information and communication technology (ICT) was not as good as in other subjects.

The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school, but a few have concerns, mainly about behaviour. Inspectors found student behaviour, both in lessons and around school, to be very good. There are very few exclusions. Students' personal development is good and their contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. Attendance is satisfactory, but a few students arrive late in the morning. All students receive very high quality support and guidance, and particular care is taken to support students who are new to the school to help them to integrate. Student views are actively sought through the school council and surveys.

Teaching and learning are good overall and at times outstanding, especially in mathematics. Teachers have high expectations and activities are varied and well paced. Assessment is thorough. The curriculum is good. At Key Stage 4 there are some vocational options as well as a range of GCSE subjects. However, there are few design and technology options and the range of vocational courses offered is limited. A few students are not able to access college courses of their choice. Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent and the high level of participation in sports encourages students to have healthy lifestyles.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by a capable senior team, provides strong leadership and drive. Self-evaluation is thorough. Monitoring of departments by the senior team is rigorous. Improvement strategies are well focused and their impact can be seen in the improving exam results and high quality of teaching and learning. The school has good capacity to improve. Governors fulfill their obligations well and have a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in English and ICT.
- Continue to develop and implement strategies to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Further develop the Key Stage 4 curriculum to provide a wider range of courses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average and achievement is good. Standards on entry to the school are below average but by the time students leave standards are broadly average. This represents good achievement. This is because targets are used effectively and teaching is good.

The 2007 national test results show that students in Key Stage 3 made good progress in mathematics and science to reach standards that are broadly average. However, in English, many students did not do as well as expected, especially boys of lower ability, and standards remain below average.

Standards increased significantly at Key Stage 4 in 2007, particularly in the number of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Results improved in many subjects, including English, mathematics, French, geography and history. However, in GCSE English, standards are still too low. Students were very successful on the vocational science course but results for vocational ICT courses were unsatisfactory in 2007.

Progress made by learners in many lessons is good as a result of good teaching. In some subjects, for example in mathematics, physical education and religious education students make very good progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Vulnerable students and those who are learning English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. This small and caring school community ensures the inclusion of all students. For example, students from another local school were successfully integrated, following its closure, and a significant number of students, for whom English is not their first language, thrive and flourish. There is a wide range of opportunities that promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is improving as a result of a range of effective strategies, but a few students do not arrive promptly in the morning. The school provides a safe and secure environment in which students are happy and behave very well. They show respect and care for one another and are proud of their school. Students feel that bullying is effectively dealt with and they are appreciative of the help and support available. The 'Pupil Active Listening Service' is excellent, offering support and providing excellent leadership development, as did the Young Sports Leader program. In addition, the student council and projects with the Youth Service and other agencies significantly contribute to students' personal development. Extensive surveys to gather the opinions of students have helped to improve the quality of their lives in school. The personal and social development programme informs students about keeping safe and healthy. A broad range of sporting activities and opportunities ensures that students understand the importance of exercise. The extent to which the majority of students are involved in the school and the local community is outstanding. Work experience and effective careers guidance ensure that students develop skills and understand the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and, in some lessons, outstanding. Planning is effective and in most lessons students are set clear objectives so they know what they are to learn and how it links to previous and future work. Good relationships between teachers and students have a positive impact on attitudes to learning and high expectations help to raise student aspirations. Students are attentive and interested and teachers are very encouraging. Students understand their targets and there is an appropriate emphasis in lessons on the requirements of different levels and grades. In most lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and activities, the pace of learning is brisk and students are challenged appropriately so that they make good progress. In the best lessons very good use is made of self and peer assessment. In several outstanding mathematics lessons inspectors noted particularly effective use of ICT and

particularly well structured activities which moved learning on in clear steps. Individual whiteboards were also used to good effect to check progress. Teachers and learning support assistants support individuals well in lessons. Occasionally there is too much whole-class teaching, or too much teacher talk where students are passive, which slows learning. Marking is helpful and often includes guidance on how work may be improved. Individual progress is monitored carefully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It offers opportunities tailored to most students' needs and aspirations and promotes enjoyment. It meets the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school provides a balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3, which includes drama. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum offers a choice of GCSE courses, together with some vocational courses. Design technology options are very limited. A few students also have the opportunity to take up college placements in areas such as hairdressing and beauty therapy, but not all students who request a place gain one. For a minority of students, including those who are not suited to the more academic curriculum, or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the school offers a more personalised curriculum which can include extended work placement. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including an 'enrichment' lesson at Key Stage 4. Students are prepared for their future working lives through careers education and work related provision. Their two weeks work experience may be linked with vocational courses they are studying. A valuable link with the youth service is used to good effect, for example, in delivering Duke of Edinburgh and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support offered by the school is outstanding. Individual students are known well and given appropriate help and guidance. Strong pastoral leadership and the total commitment of the pastoral team ensure that there is a culture of support and inclusion that permeates the school. Excellent relationships between students and staff are a key strength. The system of rewards and sanctions is highly effective in promoting positive attitudes and behaviour. Exclusions are declining and the 'on-call' and 'remove' provision ensure that behaviour support and intervention are effective. Vulnerable students, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number in public care are very well supported, ensuring that they do well and gain confidence. Specialist provision for students with Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia and those for whom English is not their first language, is outstanding. The progress of all students is closely tracked and they are aware of their targets, how well they are doing and how to improve. Regular review days involve students and parents in reflecting on progress and concerns. Students receive comprehensive guidance when making choices at times of transition. Year 7 students settle happily and quickly into secondary school life and school leavers are given a great deal of advice in choosing appropriate courses and careers. The large number of students who join the school during the school year are sensitively welcomed and integrated to ensure that they settle happily and thrive. Child protection procedures are robust and clearly understood and the school works effectively with a range of outside agencies where appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership of the headteacher and other leaders, combined with the high levels of commitment by all the staff have successfully created a school in which all students flourish and succeed. Governors have made a valuable contribution to this development.

Thorough checking to identify strengths and weaknesses, followed by well chosen actions, has brought about improvements in many aspects of the school's work. Systems for the tracking of pupil progress are well embedded and leaders are clearly accountable for raising standards. As a result, underperforming students are identified quickly and supported effectively. The wide range of strategies used to accelerate student progress ensures that students meet challenging targets in the majority of their subjects. However, in English and ICT standards are not yet high enough.

Policies are consistently applied across the school, for example, those used to recognise achievement and support behaviour management. As a result most learners are effectively included and learn in a safe and caring environment.

Improvement issues, professional development for staff and systems of performance management are well linked ensuring a coherent approach to addressing whole- school priorities. The development of support staff is a particularly strong feature of the school.

Governors and their committees function effectively and they have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Links with parents are strong and the vast majority are very supportive of the school. The wide range of external agencies involved in working with the school make a good contribution to the well-being of students.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were very impressed with your behaviour around school and we really liked all your work that was on display.

We found that your school is a good school that cares exceptionally well for you. We visited some of your lessons and had meetings with a number of you and some of the staff. We also looked at the results of questionnaires sent in by your parents. The vast majority of your parents are very positive about the school. Most of you enjoy being at school and you told us that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively and you feel safe. The school works very hard to help everyone settle in and this includes students who arrive after Year 7.

Your teachers work very hard and have high expectations of you. Most of your lessons are good and a few are outstanding, especially in mathematics. You work hard and make good progress. These factors have led to the big improvement in examination results in 2007. However, results in English and information and communication technology were not as good as in other subjects. We have asked your headteacher to work with the staff to help you do better in these subjects. You can play your part in this by working as hard as you can and, for English, by doing more reading at home.

Attendance at your school is about average but some of you arrive late in the morning. We would like every one of you to make a real effort to come to school every day and to arrive on time.

The school provides a good range of courses and subjects for you, but we have asked the headteacher and staff to look at broadening the options at Key Stage 4 so that you have even more choice. Many of you take advantage of the excellent extra-curricular activities on offer, particularly sports which many of you told us you really enjoy.

We wish you every success in the future