

Matthew Moss High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105839
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	308969
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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	894
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Rowe
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Raymer
Date of previous school inspection	20 April 2005
School address	Matthew Moss Lane Marland Rochdale Lancashire OL11 3LU
Telephone number	01706 632910
Fax number	01706 523857

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school serving an area of challenging social and economic circumstances. The numbers of students from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language are well above average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is also higher than usual. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is above average. The school holds Leading Edge and Training School status. It was designated a specialist science college in September 2007.

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 in which students make good progress and achieve well. The quality of care, guidance and support the school provides is outstanding. Because of this, students develop into confident and inquisitive young adults by the time they leave school. Very high numbers move on to full-time education and training when they reach 16 because the school encourages them to value learning and to have high aspirations for the future. The school has the confidence of parents who praise it for offering a 'rich and rounded' education for their sons and daughters. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

Students make good progress and achieve well as they move up through the school because teaching is good and highly focused on learning. From below average starting points, students attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11 standards are also broadly average, although the school recognises the need to raise further the proportion of higher attaining students gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes. This is being tackled rigorously, by the introduction of new courses and qualifications, for example. Students' work observed during the inspection and data presented by the school show clearly that standards are rising significantly.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They behave responsibly. They value the respect with which they are treated. They enjoy coming to school and speak warmly of it. Students know how important healthy lifestyles are. Large numbers take part in the extensive range of sporting enrichment activities offered. They feel safe in school. They trust adults to deal effectively with any concerns they may have. Students from different ethnic backgrounds cooperate and mix well in lessons and around school. Students contribute effectively to decision-making through the school council. They take an active part in school life by acting as peer mentors, for example. This helps them develop a sense of social responsibility and initiative. Positive attitudes to learning and good levels of basic literacy and numeracy give students a satisfactory foundation for the future. However, the largely academic curriculum for all students limits the opportunities they have to follow vocational courses and gain vocational qualifications and skills before they leave school.

Teaching and learning are good. The school's status as a Training School is used effectively to encourage teachers to develop their practice, so that their expertise can be used to train student teachers and their work can be shared with other schools. Learning is at the heart of the school. There is great consistency across subjects in enabling students to learn effectively. Teachers are skilled at posing demanding questions and encouraging students to see and understand links between what is being taught and what they have learned previously. A student's comment that, 'Learning is about more than memorising facts. It's about what you do with them when you've got them' summarises students' views, and the school's approach, succinctly.

The headteacher provides the school with thoughtful and reflective leadership. He is ably supported by other senior leaders and managers who share his values and vision for the success of the school. There is good quality strategic planning and organisation. There is strong teamwork in the pursuit of the school's overriding aim of enabling students to become effective learners. The school is focusing effectively on translating learning skills into raising standards further at GCSE. This is supported by the newly won specialist status, which has already led to higher standards by improving staffing levels and introducing new courses and qualifications.

This, and the school's strong focus on improvement, gives the school good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 for the most able students.
- Increase the range of vocational opportunities at Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress and achieve well from below average starting points. Standards in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2006 were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In 2007 standards were similar, with a slight dip in English caused by some disruption to staffing continuity. By the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to G is consistently above the national average and exceeds the school's demanding targets. The proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is broadly average and meets the school's target. However, the percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C grades overall is below average and not yet high enough. The school is tackling this rigorously and effectively. A much higher proportion of present Year 11 students are on target to reach higher standards in their examinations, compared to those over recent years. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other students. Similarly, different ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students say that they like their school and enjoy their lessons. A focus on personal development in the newly introduced mixed-age tutor groups has contributed to improved attendance, which is now in line with the national average. There is a calm atmosphere around school, good levels of consideration for others and good collaboration within lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students develop good spiritual and cultural awareness through a wide range of classroom activities and extra-curricular themed days including a successful link with students in South Africa. Assemblies, circle time and religious education lessons encourage everyone to be thoughtful and reflect on their actions. Students value the programme for personal and social education which they say, 'helps us to see both sides of arguments and how to respect other people's opinions even when we think they are wrong'. Students' personal development and confidence is enhanced by the school's wide-ranging links with the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and encourages good learning. Some teaching is outstanding. The school's focus on enabling students to become effective learners encourages them to have positive attitudes and participate actively in lessons. Teachers plan their lessons well and incorporate a variety of activities to keep students motivated and on task. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to set high expectations in most classes. They are supported effectively in their

work by knowledgeable classroom assistants and learning mentors. They are especially effective in enabling the very diverse group of students who are at the early stages of learning English to make good progress. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT), especially electronic whiteboards, to capture students' interest. In a few lessons, students' behaviour becomes challenging because the pace of teaching is too slow and does not successfully capture their interest or stimulate their learning. In the better lessons teachers use assessment information to plan work which is matched to students' needs and track their progress towards targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced: it enables students to make good progress in developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum provides effectively for students planning to progress onto the next phase of their education. Opportunities for students to follow vocational courses and engage in work-related activities are limited, however the curriculum supports students' personal development effectively. The school recognises it could do even more to prepare students for their future economic well-being, particularly in terms of their understanding of business and enterprise. The many activities at lunchtime and after school are popular with students. They enrich students' learning and help promote their physical fitness. Students are keen to stress the high levels of enjoyment they get from involvement in drama and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school pays meticulous attention to ensuring that school is a safe and welcoming place for students to work. Policies and procedures for safeguarding students are in place and reviewed regularly. The newly introduced mixed-age form tutoring system is reinvigorating the school's pastoral care system, which is now outstanding. Form teachers know students very well through these family groups and, as a result, tutors are able to promote personal development and monitor academic progress more effectively. Excellent procedures are in place to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The work of teaching assistants is central to meeting these students' needs. Learning mentor support is exceptionally well coordinated and valued by parents. Arrangements to settle students into school are highly effective. Students entering school particularly appreciate the support of senior mentors in the 'Here to Help' programme. Older students are very well informed about the opportunities open to them when they leave school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides the school with a clear vision of where he wants it to go and how to get there. Other leaders and managers support the vision and work hard to bring it about. Managers accept responsibilities eagerly. They feel valued and welcome the opportunities they are given to help move the school forward and to develop their own levels of expertise. The school's procedures for evaluating its own effectiveness are thorough and take account of the opinions of a wide range of stakeholders, including the students. As a result, the school knows

its strengths and those areas which need to be developed further. The governing body is well led, well informed and works in close partnership with the school.

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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	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?	3
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	3
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

Inspection of Matthew Moss High School, Rochdale, OL11 3LU

Thank you for making me and my fellow inspectors welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. What you told us helped us greatly in coming to our judgements.

You will be pleased to hear that we think you go to a good school. We were impressed with your behaviour and how well you get on together. The way the school cares for you and supports you is outstanding. It helps you have high aspirations and value the importance of education. Your teachers go to great lengths to make sure you receive good and challenging teaching. This helps you to make good progress as you move up through the school. However, we think more of you should gain higher GCSE grades in Year 11 so we are asking the school to make this a priority. We are also asking the school to extend the range of vocational opportunities in Key Stage 4 to prepare you even better for life after school.

Your headteacher believes passionately in helping you to become effective learners. Your teachers support him wholeheartedly in this aim. As a result, you enjoy learning and achieve well. We are confident that you will continue to work hard with your teachers to make sure that standards rise even further.