

# The Misbourne School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110490
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310330
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Mercer HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1244
6th form	205
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr K Lawes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Howard-Drake
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Misbourne Drive Great Missenden HP16 0BN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 862869
<b>Fax number</b>	01494 890491

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

The Misbourne is a larger than average, non-selective secondary modern school, with 1244 students on roll, of whom 205 are in the sixth form. The school serves the small village of Great Missenden and surrounding villages but also draws from the towns of Amersham, Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe. The Misbourne was awarded combined arts and technology specialist status in September 2006.

The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low, as is the percentage of students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is lower than average but the percentage of students with statements of special educational needs is a little above average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The Misbourne provides good quality care, satisfactory education, and an outstanding curriculum. Most students enjoy school and the range of opportunities it offers and are well supported in developing as well-rounded individuals. The majority of parents/carers are very supportive of the school. One parent described it as 'a happy, caring establishment with a family ethos.' Several commented on how the school had helped develop their children's confidence and self-esteem.

The senior leadership team, inspired by a headteacher with vision and determination, are setting a clear direction for improving the education in the school. They have worked hard in the last few years to remove a significant financial deficit, whilst improving much of the accommodation and learning resources and revising the curriculum. The move to an innovative new leadership structure in the school, whilst overcoming the inherent difficulties associated with managing significant change, demonstrates the school's commitment to continuing improvement.

However, managers acknowledge that whilst this change was underway they 'took their eye off the ball' regarding students' achievement. Students' results in external examinations have been above average for several years. In 2007 the proportion of students attaining five or more A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations declined, though remained at the national average. Many students made less progress than expected, and they did not meet the challenging targets set.

Managers have acknowledged that the tracking of progress was not sufficiently rigorous and targets set often too optimistic. Consequently, the school is developing its target setting, tracking and monitoring processes so that any students at risk of underachieving are identified much earlier, and given appropriate support. The school's data for the current year provide early indications that students are now making satisfactory progress and target setting for individuals, and at subject level, is more realistic.

Whilst there is some good and outstanding teaching, the quality of teaching and assessment remains inconsistent across subjects. Not all teachers make full use of data available on students' prior attainment to plan to meet the different needs and abilities of all students in their classes. The school has experienced recent difficulties in recruiting staff in some areas and this has had an impact on the quality of teaching and students' progress. The staffing situation is now stabilising. The school monitors the quality of teaching and learning. Managers have a clear understanding of where the better and weaker teaching is in the school and take appropriate action to secure improvements.

The school has made significant changes to the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all students and it is now outstanding. The range of pathways for students in Years 10 and 11 is excellent, providing very good choice of subjects and a comprehensive programme of work related learning and work experience. The school also offers different routes for students in Key Stage 3, based on the assessment of their abilities when they join the school. This has led to an "access" route to support those with lower levels of basic skills, and an "accelerated" route for more able students, who have the opportunity to move at a faster pace and take national tests earlier than usual. The school has made good use of its first year of the specialist status in arts and technology to forge very good community links and work closely with local schools and community groups on arts related projects.

Students and parents/carers speak positively about the good care and support offered by the school. Many parents/carers commented that their children were very well supported when

joining the school and helped to settle in quickly. The school is very inclusive and good links with a range of external agencies provides further support for their personal development and well-being.

Senior managers and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, through largely effective self-assessment. While the consistency of approach to self-assessment is improving, the action plans do not always identify clearly measurable outcomes to help the school gauge their success.

Now that the school has improved its financial position, implemented the revised management structure across the school, developed the curriculum to fully meet the needs of its students and is implementing more rigorous tracking of progress it demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Overall quality of the sixth form provision is satisfactory. Students' progress is broadly in line with predictions based on their prior attainment, though there is some variability between subjects. Pass rates for AS-level subjects improved in 2007 and were above average, and A-level pass rates remained around the high national average. Just over half the students achieved grades A-C at A level.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A few parents/carers expressed concerns about occasional lack of class cover. Some poor accommodation has a negative impact on the quality of the learning environment.

The school offers a wide range of academic courses and has plans to extend the range of vocational courses to provide clear progression pathways between Year 11 and the sixth form. A good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities makes a positive contribution to the good personal development of sixth formers. They make a very strong contribution to the school and wider community through mentoring younger students, and organising charitable and fundraising events.

Care, guidance and support are good. Tutors monitor progress towards expected grades and take appropriate action to support those students identified as being at risk of underachieving. Guidance for careers and entry to higher education (HE) are good and progression rates to HE are good.

Recent changes in staffing for the leadership of the sixth form have restricted the school's drive to further develop provision and new arrangements are now in place to support further improvements.

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

- Ensure that all teachers make effective use of data and assessment information to plan to meet the needs of all students in lessons.
- Simplify target setting processes so that staff at all levels can use them to monitor progress more effectively to raise achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the quality and consistency of self-evaluation at all levels so that progress on actions for improvement can be clearly measured.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are above average. Students join the school with slightly above average attainment and make at least satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Results of national tests in English, mathematics and science are above the national average.

Although the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A\*-C grades declined in 2007, the proportion of students gaining five A\*-C grades including English and mathematics increased and was above the national average. Students' average points scores for their best eight subjects have been above average for several years. Having identified that students' progress at Key Stage 4 was inconsistent and below the expected level in some subjects, the school has moved quickly to address these issues. More robust tracking and early intervention is improving rates of progress, which are now satisfactory.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in the school and make good progress.

Students' attainment in most specialist subjects is good. For example, A\*-C passes in design and technology were above average and well above average in art and design. A high proportion of students gained A and B grades in A-level art and standards of work are high.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development is good. They enjoy their education and their generally good behaviour makes a significant contribution to the positive atmosphere in the school. Some students and parents/carers report that a minority of students occasionally disrupt lessons. This happens very occasionally when teachers do not implement behaviour management strategies consistently.

Students say they feel safe in school and any incidents of bullying are quickly resolved, helped by the presence of anti-bullying mediators. Attendance is good, although the school recognises that punctuality could be better.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Lessons incorporating personal, social and health education and citizenship make a good contribution to the students' broader education. Their cultural awareness is developed through a good range of visits, especially in the arts. Students are aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles, promoted through the curriculum and in the school's cafeteria.

Students make an active contribution to life in school and the wider community, for example, working as mentors to support young or vulnerable students. The school has also established good links with a school in Ethiopia, which members of the sixth form visited this year.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Recent monitoring of classroom practice has accurately identified lessons where students do not achieve as well as they can but improvement strategies are not yet having sufficient impact on students' progress.

In the best lessons, teachers plan well and take time to assess pupils' understanding. They provide a wide range of interesting learning activities that are challenging and match the needs of all students, with good opportunities for students to work independently and in groups. Very good relationships between teachers and students, and between students themselves, enhance learning.

The less successful lessons move at a slow pace and do not sufficiently meet students' differing needs. Some students are not sufficiently challenged and others are not clear about what they are expected to learn. The use of assessment information to plan lessons and set targets is improving but not yet consistent. The quality of marking is variable and students do not always know what they need to do to improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum is very well tailored to meet the needs of students of all abilities. Students can choose between two modern languages and more able science students can attend an after school club. Key Stage 4 students are able to choose from a wide range of GCSE courses and a carefully considered choice of vocational courses. Effective partnerships enhance students' experiences, for example, the link with the Roald Dahl Centre. The school's specialist status in the arts and technology has enriched students' experience, through the mainstream courses and sharing good practice with other schools. Students speak enthusiastically about the wide variety of after-school activities and good range of educational visits.

### Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. The learning support unit is a fully inclusive facility that provides a safe and secure base and meets the physical, learning or behavioural needs of students who need extra support. The work of all staff associated with this area ensures that all students make good progress. Child protection and risk assessment procedures meet legislative requirements.

The school has established good systems to help students to work towards their academic and personal goals. New procedures are in place to track students' progress towards identified targets. These enable underachievement to be identified early and support put in place.

Students receive good advice and guidance on subject choices and careers and are well prepared for future employment through work experience. Progression to further education or employment is good.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some clear strengths. The senior leadership has succeeded in resolving its inherited budget deficit whilst improving accommodation and resources and addressing the weakest teaching robustly. The senior leaders have developed a very creative approach to revising the school management structure to help plan for the future and ensure improvement in all aspects of the school's provision.

Managers acknowledge that students' achievement was not monitored rigorously enough during this period of change, and improved tracking processes are now being implemented. Self-evaluation is effective at identifying relative strengths and areas for improvement but actions for improvement do not always have clearly measurable outcomes and timescales. Systems are in place for monitoring work across the curriculum with new teams charged with tackling areas of concern but these are relatively new and only beginning to have an impact.

Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. They have developed close links to different year groups and curriculum areas and know when and how to challenge effectively to secure better outcomes.

There is a clear vision for the development of the school's specialist status and how this will broaden students' experience and raise achievement. While the school did not meet all its specialist targets in the first year, some excellent community links and projects were developed.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
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	2	

### 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	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	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

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

17 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Misbourne School, Great Missenden, HP16 0BN

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome and helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you, in your lessons and around the school. Many of you and your parents/carers spoke positively about the school. We have taken these views in to account in arriving at our judgement that the school is satisfactory, with some good features and an outstanding curriculum.

Academic standards in the school have been good over several years. However, in 2007 the GCSE results were not as good as in previous years. We have asked the school to track individual students' progress carefully, so that if any of you are not making as much progress as you should, the school can take prompt action to improve the situation and raise achievement in Years 10 and 11.

We were impressed by your good behaviour around the school, although there are still times when a few students disrupt lessons and this can affect everyone's learning. You behave well when lessons are well taught and capture your interest. We have asked the school to make sure all teachers use assessment information well to plan lessons to meet your different needs and abilities in all subjects.

You have an excellent range of subjects and courses and the school plans to introduce more vocational courses into the sixth form. Many of you join in extra curricular activities after school or at lunchtimes and take part enthusiastically in school and community events.

Staff have started to bring about many improvements and managers have high aspirations for the school's future. Managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. We have asked them to make sure that actions for improvement have clear and measurable targets so they can be sure the necessary improvements are taking place. Your teachers are committed to improving the school further to give you all the best opportunities possible to do well. We have confidence that the school will continue to improve and that you will all contribute to making it a success.

With best wishes for the future,

Janet Mercer

Her Majesty's Inspector