

John Masefield High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116955
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	312456
Inspection date	20 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	930
6th form	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Spencer Lane
Headteacher	Andrew Evans
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Mabels Furlong Ledbury HR8 2HF
Telephone number	01531 631012
Fax number	01531 631433

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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; personal development and well-being; teaching and learning; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; achievement and attainment information; observation of lessons; scrutiny of documentation provided by the school; observation of the school at work; discussion with senior and middle managers, and talking to governors and students; and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

John Masefield High School is a comprehensive school of average size. It serves the market town of Ledbury and its surrounding rural area. Over 95% of students are of White British background, with a very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and from Traveller communities. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school gained Performing Arts College status in 1999, the Artsmark Gold award in 2003 and 2006, Training School status in September 2004 and Healthy School award in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

John Masefield is a good school with some outstanding features. Students are proud of their school and parents praise the school for its wide-ranging extra-curricular activities, its good care and support, and the new house system. The school has made continuous improvement since its last inspection.

Students enjoy school and comment on the good teaching and the many clubs and activities on offer. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and students feel safe in school. Relationships between staff and students are very good. Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding and developed very well through challenge days, which focus on global issues such as world trade and team building activities. Participation in sports events is excellent and has increased as a result of the house system. Students have a very good understanding of how important it is to adopt a healthy lifestyle and make sensible food choices at lunchtime. Students make an outstanding contribution to the community, for example, the student-led team won the eco school 'Green Flag Award' for their excellent work on developing more sustainable practices within the school. Other successful activities have included a group of students creating a garden at the local youth centre. The development of workplace skills is good with many students on vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and additional literacy and numeracy support for younger students. The recent improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) have ensured that students will make better progress in developing these skills. Attendance remains average although the school works hard to improve this and absence remains a key focus for the school.

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment. The academic progress that students make from joining the school to the end of Year 11 is good overall, although there are differences between the key stages. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9, while above the national average, dipped in 2006 but improved in 2007. The school's data for current Years 8 and 9 students indicate they will make better progress. Standards have continued to rise at Key Stage 4 and this is where the school has made significant improvements. The number of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* - C, including English and mathematics, has risen sharply over the last few years at a much faster rate than national results, and is well above average. Current assessments for Year 11 indicate this trend will continue. Very effective use of academic mentors has contributed to the school's success at Key Stage 4. The progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students from Traveller communities is good. The needs of vulnerable students are being increasingly met through the access curriculum. This allows for more focused support and flexibility in the curriculum.

The good curriculum is broad and meets the needs of individual students well. It offers a range of vocational courses and fast track opportunities for gifted and talented students to study two languages and take GCSE mathematics early. There are good opportunities for an alternative learning programme run by other providers offering courses in rural science and construction. The curriculum is kept under constant review. Students enjoy and take part in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities including cultural and exchange trips to France, Germany and Catalonia.

Performing Art College status has brought many benefits to the school, students and local community. It contributes greatly to students' excellent cultural development and develops

their personal and social skills. The curriculum has been enriched by Year 9 taking the Arts Award, and increasing numbers of students take up dance, drama and music in Key Stage 4. Drama, dance and music have made a good contribution to the school's art status, with students taking part in many shows and performances, such as Grease and Twisted Tales. More students are now receiving music tuition. Achievement is good to outstanding in drama and dance, with improvement being made in music.

Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality has improved rapidly over the last two years, and there is an increasing amount of outstanding teaching. This improvement is the result of the high priority the school gives to the training and development of its staff. A range of teacher tool kit sessions and targeted coaching and support has improved the skills of all staff. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are well planned to meet the individual needs of all learners. There is a focus on learners enjoying lessons and being challenged to think for themselves. The school has identified that some lessons are not planned effectively for the different needs of students in a class. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and classrooms are well managed.

Staff give high importance to the welfare of their students, and the quality of pastoral care and support they provide is good. Secure systems are in place to safeguard students and promote their well-being. These systems have been improved recently by more closely coordinating the different aspects of support for vulnerable students. Early signs are that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are benefiting significantly from being educated alongside their peers. Students at an early stage of learning English are also benefiting from being part of the access curriculum. In order to help students make faster progress in Year 7, the school has developed stronger links with primary schools to develop joint work. This transition work has particularly benefited students from Traveller communities whose confidence has been boosted and familiarity with secondary school has started before arrival. Student's progress is monitored regularly, but academic target setting in student planners is inconsistent across the school.

The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher is complemented very well by that of the dedicated and committed deputy. All of the senior leadership team provide outstanding direction and vision. This has focused on setting challenging targets, improving the quality of teaching and learning and thus raising standards. Actions have been particularly effective in improving GCSE results. Improvements have yet to show in external tests in Key Stage 3, but the school's very rigorous internal monitoring confirms that this will be the case. The very detailed and rigorous monitoring of the school's work at all levels of leadership is leading to extremely accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvement in some areas has been slower where leadership has been weaker. School leaders, including governors, have worked persistently to improve the quality of middle leaders. All are contributing effectively towards the school's evaluation and planning. Some though are new in post but there is considerable expertise in the school to support their development. This very strong track record of improvement and very effective evaluation of its work indicate that there is excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form provides an outstanding quality of education. Students make excellent progress and achieve examination results that are higher than those nationally. An increasing proportion of students also achieve higher grades. Approximately 75% of students go on to university. A number of key factors are behind the success of the sixth form. These include the outstanding

teaching and learning alongside the high quality individual academic guidance and support students receive. Students really enjoy the ethos created by the sixth form. Sixth form students are excellent role models for the rest of the school and are actively involved in the life of the school. They are leaders of the house system, and act as mentors and teaching assistants. Students regularly raise money for charity and this extends to visiting South Africa to work with disadvantaged young people. Because of its success, increasing numbers stay on in the sixth form. Students are offered a wide range of A and AS level courses and a limited range of vocational courses. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and have brought about significant improvements in raising the achievements of students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work closely with parents, carers and students to improve attendance of a minority of students.
- Ensure teaching and lesson planning consistently challenge students of all abilities.

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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	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?	2	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	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

21 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of John Masefield High School, Ledbury HR8 2HF

I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we visited your school recently. Thank you for talking with us and giving us your views. We were very impressed by your good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

You are right to be proud of your school. Inspectors have judged the school to be good with some outstanding features. You have an excellent headteacher who continues to improve the school. You enjoy school and feel safe. Relationships between staff and students are very good. Your spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding and is developed very well through challenge days. Many of you participate in sports and this has increased with the house system. The house system is popular. The positive contribution you make to the community is outstanding, we were impressed that the eco schools team won the eco school 'Green Flag Award' for their excellent work on developing more sustainable practices within the school. You make good progress by the end of Year 11 and GCSE results continue to improve and are well above the national average. The school provides good care and support to help you to do well. The school's Specialist status in performing arts has provided you with more opportunities and activities, which you enjoy. A high priority is given to improving the quality of the lessons you receive and teaching is good overall with an increasing amount of outstanding teaching. The sixth form at your school is providing an outstanding quality of education; sixth formers do extremely well in their examinations and are excellent role models for the school.

There are some areas the school needs to improve further; we have asked the headteacher and senior managers to:

- work closely with parents, carers and students to improve the attendance of a minority of students
- ensure teaching and lesson planning consistently challenge all of your different abilities

Senior managers have a clear view of how the school is doing and where they can make improvements. The managers, teachers, governors and staff are very committed to their work. We encourage you to continue to support the school and play your part in making it even better. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely Davinder Dosanjh Her Majesty's Inspector

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Yours sincerely
Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector