

# Morecambe Community High School Specialist College for Mathematics & Computing

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119761
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313417
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Cox

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1429
6th form	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Judith Catt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John McNaughton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Dallam Avenue Morecambe Lancashire LA4 5BG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 410207
<b>Fax number</b>	01524 420156

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, on secondment to Ofsted, and four other Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Morecambe Community High School is a large secondary school with a sixth form. There are slightly more boys than girls. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or who do not speak English as their first language. The majority of students come from less well advantaged backgrounds. Those who are entitled to free school meals represent about one fifth of the school. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. The school secured Maths and Computing Specialist Status in 2007. The school is oversubscribed and has the Healthy School Award and Sports Mark.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Morecambe Community High School provides its students with a satisfactory education. Under the leadership of the headteacher and the support of the senior staff, the school is now improving. There is recognition that leadership and management in some areas need to be strengthened to secure the necessary improvements. The award in September 2007 of specialist college status in mathematics and computing reflects the hard work of staff, particularly those who have brought about significant improvements in information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum overall is satisfactory. The school has, in the main, resolved the key issues from the previous inspection. Attendance and punctuality have improved considerably because the school is working more closely with its students in a developing culture of praise and reward. A typical comment from students was, 'We are now a community working together'.

Students' attainment on entry is broadly average. The majority make satisfactory progress so that by Year 11 most have reached standards in line with their capabilities. Teaching is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory, sometimes good, progress in lessons. The school's data show that all groups of students are on track to reach the challenging targets set for next year. Students display positive attitudes to learning when the teaching is satisfactory or better. There was some good behaviour seen in lessons and around the school. Most students do well to arrive at lessons on time given that they often move between separate buildings. They behave sensibly and safely in areas of most congestion. The majority of students are polite and friendly young people who have generally good relationships with their teachers and one another. They have opportunities to take on responsible positions such as peer mentors and, when in Year 11, as 'seniors' who provide additional support to the younger students in their first year at school. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Improvements in attendance, behaviour and students' progress have helped demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form is satisfactory. Students' personal development is good. They attend school regularly and have mature attitudes to learning. They are knowledgeable about leading a healthy lifestyle, take on a range of responsibilities and contribute willingly to the school and the wider community. Students join the sixth form with standards which are close to average and most progress to achieve in line with national rates. Standards and examination pass rates are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. In 2006, examination results were average; they dipped slightly in 2007 but students' achievement remained satisfactory given their starting points and capabilities. Students achieve best in English literature and least well in design technology, biology, physics and psychology. The variability in standards and achievement between subject areas mirrors variability in the quality of teaching. Most teaching is satisfactory and a relatively small proportion is good. However, the pace of learning in some lessons is slow because teachers' expectations of students' capabilities are too low and this restricts progress. The present curriculum limits choice for lower ability students; there are no vocational routes. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and rightly believe they are well cared for and supported. Retention rates are good. The academic guidance they receive is satisfactory. Leaders recognise the need for more rigorous tracking of students' progress and clearer short term targets. Overall,

leadership and management are satisfactory and appropriate priorities for development, such as broadening the curriculum, have been identified. Given students' satisfactory achievement and good attitudes, the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Improve achievement across the school by increasing the pace and level of challenge in lessons.
- Ensure a coherent approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning, and student progress.
- Ensure that all key leaders and managers have the necessary skills to sustain the pace of improvement.

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**

Students come to the school with broadly average attainment. Most make satisfactory progress so that by Year 11 the majority have reached standards in line with their capabilities. At Key Stage 3, standards over time have been broadly satisfactory. However, while the majority of students made satisfactory progress some did not. Results in 2007 mirrored those achieved the year before but this represents better progress, given the students' starting points. Students made better progress in English and mathematics than they did in science.

The proportion of students attaining five good passes at GCSE is also average. Most students met their targets but these were not challenging enough. Students performed best in mathematics, English literature and statistics and least well in science and design and technology. In 2007, lower attaining students and a minority of some of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved less well than other groups.

Inspection evidence shows that current students are making satisfactory or better progress in lessons. School data shows that all groups of students are on track to reach more challenging targets this year. Improvements to both the curriculum and to the quality of teaching and learning in science are leading to rising standards in this previously weak subject area.

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

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students develop the personal qualities and economic awareness required for their adult working lives because of an effective work experience programme, the development of their basic skills and involvement with careers fairs through partnership arrangements with Connexions.

Many students have positive attitudes to learning although, in some lessons where teaching is insufficiently challenging or of a slow pace, the poor behaviour of a few students disturbs the learning of all. Students have responded positively to the school's new approach in dealing with inappropriate behaviour. This has reduced considerably the number of fixed-term and

permanent exclusions. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory and some good behaviour was seen in lessons and around the school. The majority of students are polite and friendly young people. The relationships between students and with teachers are generally good.

Attendance has shown a big improvement this year and is now satisfactory. Students are mostly punctual with only a few arriving late for morning registration and lessons. In the sixth form, attendance and punctuality are good because students generally show a more positive and mature attitude to their learning. Students' enjoyment of school is evident in the high take-up of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. They say they feel safe knowing that incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and efficiently. The impact of two hours physical activity for all students each week and the promotion of healthy eating options are encouraging students to adopt healthy life styles. Students take on responsibility by serving on the school council, raising money for charities, acting as peer mentors and 'seniors' when in Year 11 to provide support for new students in Year 7.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

In the school and in the sixth form, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some that is good. In the lessons where students make the most progress, there are common effective characteristics in the quality of teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, lessons are well organised and teachers provide good explanations of the work to be done. Good relationships between staff and students promote learning; students feel safe and well supported in an environment of mutual respect. Frequently, students are thoroughly engaged and the lessons proceed at a brisk pace which holds their attention and creates enjoyment. Where teaching is satisfactory, a small minority of students are insufficiently challenged or motivated. They are easily distracted and lack the learning skills needed to progress independently. A weak strand throughout the school is the limited assessment of students' work. The quality of feedback to the students in lessons is variable, so too are the regularity and usefulness of the marking of their work. Consequently, students do not always have a clear understanding of how to improve. Most teachers are using the new resources including data projectors, acquired as a result of the school gaining specialist status, well to support their work. Students enjoy using the new equipment and speak excitedly and proudly of having become a specialist college.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory and improving. Specialist school status is assisting in this improvement of basic skills. The course for citizenship, life and social skills (CLASS) has a positive impact on the personal development of all pupils. A limited range, particularly of vocational courses, limits students' choice at Key Stage 4. A programme of activities supporting enterprise skills at Key Stage 4 contributes well to students' economic awareness, but is not available to students at Key Stage 3. The curriculum is limited in meeting the specific needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. A substantial programme of outdoor activities, school visits and after school clubs, particularly

in sport and performing arts, contributes significantly to the personal development of students and their enjoyment of school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care support is a strength. A range of initiatives, including the Learning, Inclusion and Nurture Centre (LINC), provides good care and support for students, particularly those who are at risk of exclusion and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good relationships with outside agencies support the work of the school. Policies and procedures for safeguarding meet government requirements and are understood by staff. Close liaison with primary schools supports the smooth transition of students into Year 7. Guidance on options and careers helps students make informed decisions about their futures. However, the school offers only limited guidance to promote vocational routes and career options in Key Stage 4 and sixth form. The quality of academic guidance across subjects is variable. Not all students are aware of their targets and many have only a rudimentary understanding of how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The recently appointed headteacher is providing effective leadership. He knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and has a clear vision of what the school must do to improve. He is firmly focused on raising achievement and is setting about making the necessary changes to raise standards with determination and rigour. He has restructured the extended leadership team's responsibilities and recognises that leadership and management in some areas need to be strengthened to ensure that the pace of improvement is sustained. In the two terms since his appointment, a number of important areas have been addressed, including attendance and punctuality. These have improved significantly due to the developing culture of praise and rewards, and the recent improvements in students' progress in lessons.

The school has begun to put in place systems for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. These systems are designed to inform planning for improvement and include lesson monitoring and department self-evaluation. However, the impact of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all students is not sufficiently monitored and evaluated by the school to better inform planning. The school is starting to set meaningful and challenging targets for students, and is setting up arrangements to better monitor their progress towards meeting them. Governors now understand the importance of challenging as well as supporting the school. They are beginning to exercise their responsibilities more effectively by holding the headteacher and his team to account for the school's performance.

There has been little time for the newly acquired specialist status to raise the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. However, the new status, facilities and equipment are having a positive impact on student and staff morale.





## 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?	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?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

<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	3	
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	3	
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	

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**Annex B**

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Morecambe Community High School – Specialist College for Mathematics and Computing, Lancashire, LA4 5BG

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we recently inspected your school. We spoke to a number of you, and to the headteacher and many of your teachers. We observed lessons, looked at some of your work, reviewed the school's examination results over the last three years and looked at other areas of the school's work. We are pleased to be able to share our findings with you and to tell you that we agree with many of your views.

Overall, we judged Morecambe Community High School to be satisfactory.

The headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your school. Many new things have already begun, like the involvement of some of you in writing the school's policy on behaviour. It is good to see that your attendance has much improved and that the pastoral care provided to you is a strength. We have asked your headteacher and the governors to work on three areas for improvement:

- To boost your achievement by increasing the pace and level of challenge in all lessons. You can help by behaving well and telling your teachers when you find the work too easy or too hard.
- To be more rigorous in tracking your learning and progress over time. This means your teachers will watch and learn from each other the best ways of teaching you. They will tell you more accurately how you are doing and what you must do to improve.
- To ensure that all key leaders and managers have the information and skills they need to ensure the pace of improvement is embedded and sustained. This means that the headteacher and his staff will build upon the improvements already started and will see them through.

With your mature outlook and willingness to do well in all subjects, I am sure you will help your school to go from strength-to-strength. Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely

Peter Cox

Lead inspector