

Maghull High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104958
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324137
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Williams 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1316
Sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Howe
Headteacher	Mr Mark Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2005
School address	Ormonde Drive Maghull Liverpool Merseyside L31 7AW
Telephone number	0151 526 2711
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is much larger than most secondary schools and has grown in size since the previous inspection. This has been particular evident in the sixth form where numbers entering have increased in size by 25% over the last two years. Overall, the school draws students from a wide area encompassing four local authorities. A high proportion of students use public transport. The majority of students are White British. Students' attainment on entry spans a wide ability range. While broadly average, a significant number increasingly have poor literacy skills. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The school holds a number of national awards including Artsmark Gold. It is in its sixth year as a specialist school for the performing arts. In May 2007, it was awarded National Enterprise Specialism Hub status for the performing arts in recognition of its extensive enterprising activities.

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 that has benefited greatly from its specialism. An outstanding curriculum, continually reviewed and adapted to meet changing circumstances, together with the performing arts programme have had a major impact on students' personal and creative development and their progress in learning. Students throughout the school demonstrate outstanding levels of personal development and well-being. Particularly impressive is students' excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles, particularly in physical education and the performing arts. Teaching is good, overall, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding, particularly in the specialism. As a result of these positive features, students make good progress in their learning to achieve overall standards at Key Stage 3 that are in line with national averages and, in some cases such as English and science in 2007, just above. Similarly when 5 A* to C including English and mathematics are taken into account, average standards are attained at Key Stage 4. However, the proportion of students attaining 5 A* to C at GCSE in 2007 and 2008 is just above average and the proportion attaining 5 A* to G is significantly above.

A particularly strong feature of the school's drive to become even more inclusive as it takes students from an increasing wide area is the outstanding level of care, guidance and support for vulnerable pupils. The Phoenix Centre, for example, identifies the needs of students quickly and puts into place very good levels of support. This enables all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well.

Leadership and management are good. The school knows itself well and is using its specialism to good effect, for example, in making use of drama staff to share their expertise and promote high quality teaching and learning in other subjects. Nonetheless, leaders recognise there is some inconsistency in the way students' work is marked and in the way the needs of different groups of students, the more able particularly, are planned for and met in lessons. The role of middle leaders is developing well, for example, checking what goes on in the classroom. However, not all departmental reviews are as rigorous as the best. Overall, leaders are demonstrating a good capacity to improve the school further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The quality of sixth form provision is good. A key feature is the outstanding quality of the leadership which has ensured its continuous development and improvement. The result is that students really enjoy sixth form life and display outstanding attributes, attitudes and behaviour in their personal development and well-being. As one student remarked, 'it is our little community'.

As part of its inclusive nature, the school adopts a policy of 'open enrolment' for the sixth form. Most students enter with below average attainments. Nevertheless, they make good progress and achieve results that are broadly in line with national averages although, as leaders are aware, there is some variance between subjects. The great majority of students complete their courses and a high proportion go on to higher education.

Leaders are continuously improving the curriculum and there are outstanding opportunities for enrichment. For example, there is an excellent range of academic, applied and vocational courses. Provision is further enhanced by effective collaborative arrangements with neighbouring educational institutions and the school's specialist status. Teaching is good in the sixth form

and typically features all-round mutual respect. Rigorous mentoring arrangements are in place that track progress and support individual needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensuring greater consistency in the quality of marking so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Make sure the needs of different groups of students, especially the more able, are met in lessons.
- Build on good developments in middle leadership to ensure departmental reviews are as thorough as the best to improve performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter Year 7 with varying needs and abilities that while broadly average span a wide range. They attain standards overall at Key Stage 4 that are average. Nonetheless, at GCSE 5 A* to C they are just above average and at 5 A* to G they are significantly above average. While at 5 A* to C this represents an apparent decline in standards since the previous inspection, students' progress overall is still good. Particularly pleasing has been the performance in drama, one of the specialism subjects, in 2007. Here the proportion of students attaining A* to A and A* to C was significantly above the national average. Provisional results for 2008 indicate that this year's GCSE results at 5 A* to C, including English and mathematics, are disappointing. The school recognises a minority of students in mathematics in last year's Year 11 were not best served by the examination level entered and, as a result they attained a lower grade than previous modules had indicated. The effect of this was to bring the overall measure down from above the national average to broadly in line with the average.

The school's own assessments over time, confirmed by the inspection, highlight increasingly that the literacy skills of some students on entry are poor. To counter this, the school has in place a number of very good initiatives to develop reading and writing skills and enhance the skills required for learning. These measures are proving successful ensuring that such students, plus those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The overall rates of good progress were confirmed in lessons and students' work.

Owing to national difficulties in the marking of Key Stage 3 tests this year, it has not been possible to make judgements about the results this year. However, students in Years 7 to 9, thanks to generally good teaching and excellent support, make good progress in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The outstanding personal development and well-being of students makes a significant contribution to their achievement. Students enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good and improving. During the inspection, the great majority of students demonstrated excellent behaviour both in and out of the classroom. Students spoken to during the inspection reported they were safe and are well cared for. Students participate very well in the numerous enrichment activities available. They display excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles, especially in physical education and the performing arts. Their contribution to school and the wider community is outstanding, enabling them to enhance their appreciation of other communities. Many are keen to take on responsibilities in school such as school councillors and, in the case

of sixth formers, to mentor younger students. In the wider community, students become involved in a wide range of charitable and voluntary work, including work in local primary schools. Students are very well prepared for the world of work acquiring skills across the curriculum, in enrichment activities and through the enterprise programme, for example, delivering training to teachers from outside the school as part of the school's national hub status.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. There is an increasing proportion, particularly within the specialism, that is outstanding. Typically lessons are well planned with a good mix of talk and task which keep students engaged. For example, in a Year 11 drama lesson the good variety of tasks kept all students involved in learning throughout and ensured they made very good progress. Overall, where teacher expectations are high and activities challenging, they drive learning. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well understood. Classroom assistants provide effective support for their learning. Consequently, such pupils make similar good progress to their peers. However, in some lessons the needs of the more able are not sufficiently met because what they are to achieve is not consistently made clear in lesson plans. In addition, the quality of day-to-day marking is variable between teachers and departments. Students do not always know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve to reach the next level in their studies. However, where it is good, students are very clear what to do next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides its students with an outstanding curriculum throughout. It is continuously reviewed and adapted to meet changing circumstances both in school and, for example, work and business related learning. The performing arts programme has a major impact on students' personal development and builds their self-esteem. Statutory requirements are enhanced by specialist performing arts subjects. At Key Stage 3, dance and drama enhance students' creative development. In Year 7, an enrichment programme of themed projects has been recently introduced to encourage independent learning and students who experience particular difficulties in literacy have additional support in the development of their basic skills. There is a broad range of GCSE subjects available to students in Years 10 and 11. Partnerships with other providers have extended the number of vocational programmes on offer. There is excellent additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, as a result, these students make good progress. Provision for students' personal and social education including citizenship is delivered across the curriculum and on enrichment days. The school was awarded the National Enterprise Specialism Hub status for the performing arts in recognition of its extensive enterprising activities. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which have a particular focus on sports and performing arts. A variety of trips, visits and residential activities in this country and internationally increase opportunities for the students and broaden their experiences of cultures and communities other than their own.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Vulnerable students are supported very effectively through planned support and actions. For example, the Phoenix Centre identifies the needs of students at an early stage and puts into place very good support which enables them to make good progress in their learning. Excellent care, guidance and support are also given for potential difficulties to be resolved early, for example through initiatives like restorative justice. This often results in problems being resolved and pupils enhancing their skills in managing conflict. Overall, students know what their targets are, for example, GCSE and A level grades and what they have to do to attain them.

Arrangements for the transition of pupils from primary to secondary are very effective enabling students to settle in well, as they are from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, into the sixth form and into the world of work and higher education. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership is good, overall, in the main school. It is outstanding in the sixth form. Senior leaders set a clear agenda which is understood by students and staff alike. At the heart of this agenda is inclusion; the school is firm in its view that all students will achieve. To this end leaders have successfully enhanced curriculum provision and extended the range of opportunities available, for example the excellent work of the Phoenix Centre. As a result of good leadership, students achieve well in their work and demonstrate outstanding attributes in their personal development and well-being.

Leadership is distributed well throughout the school with good lines of communication and accountability. Governors enhance this accountability through their good support and challenge to the school. Together they recognise the school's strengths and areas for development well. Good improvement plans are in place and recent successes include more able girls attaining higher standards, for example, at GCSE A*-A. Nonetheless, the school recognises that some inconsistencies remain. It is aware that the needs of more able pupils in general are not readily identified in teacher's planning. The role of heads of department and middle leaders is developing well, for example, monitoring what goes on in the classroom. However, the information gained is not always recorded or used robustly to maximum effect in improving performance.

The school uses its resources well. New and recent appointments and leadership of the specialism and the sixth form are bringing positive results. An example of this is the lead taken by specialism staff to promote high quality teaching and learning. Pupils and parents are in the main positive about the work of the school. It runs well on a day-to-day basis and enjoys a sense of harmony. The capacity shown by leaders to develop and improve the school further is good.

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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	2
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	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	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Maghull High School, Liverpool, L31 7AW

Thank you for your welcome when my colleagues and I visited your school recently.

We enjoyed meeting with you, speaking with you and seeing you at work.

We have judged your school and sixth form to be good. You make good progress in your learning. Particularly impressive are the excellent attitudes you display which make us judge your personal development and well-being to be outstanding. You are clearly helped to make this progress through good teaching and an outstanding curriculum. Throughout the school, we could really see how the performing arts specialism has built up your self-esteem and presented you with a wide range of enrichment activities. We could also see how features such as the Phoenix Centre are helping many of you greatly. Of course you know that these things do not just happen. They happen at Maghull High School because your school is led and managed well, and outstandingly so in the sixth form.

So what does your school need to do next? We have asked that the leaders and managers ensure that when your work is marked it makes clear to you how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. We have also asked that all lessons meet the needs of different groups of students, the more able in particular. Finally, we have asked that all departmental reviews are as thorough as the best in the school.

We know you will want to support the school as it moves ahead, particularly in its performing arts specialism.

We wish you all every success for the future.