

# Malbank School and Sixth Form College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111419
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	331291
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Toft 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1330
Sixth form	267
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr G Watts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Welsh Row Nantwich Cheshire CW5 5HD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 611009
<b>Fax number</b>	01270 610350

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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

Malbank School and Sixth Form College is a larger than average foundation comprehensive school. Most of the students come from Nantwich, Crewe and the surrounding area. A third of those in the sixth form join the school from other local high schools and further afield at the start of Year 12. The students are largely White British and few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well below average. The school has had specialist Performing Arts status since 2002.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Malbank is a satisfactory school with many good features. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. Given its good leadership and management, its clear commitment to raise standards further and its recent track record in managing change it has a good capacity for further improvement. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school is well led by a determined headteacher capably supported by a strong senior leadership team. With the committed and knowledgeable backing of the governing body, they have created an atmosphere of cooperation within the school. Leaders at all levels are authorised and expected to play a full part in running the school. Middle leadership has been strengthened considerably, although some variation remains in the effectiveness of such leaders. The school has a crystal clear idea of how well it is performing. This is aided by an innovative system for the tracking of progress which enables staff and students to see how well the students are doing and who needs help when falling behind. Parents value the very good information the school gives them on their children's progress.

The school contributes significantly to the local community, including helping primary schools in the teaching of specialist subjects. Students have extensive opportunities to experience life outside the school and they make an outstanding contribution to the community. They participate extensively in the outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities and this supports their academic learning and personal development well. This is aided by the school's well structured provision of care, guidance and support. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and older students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form have a wide variety of subject choice.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Many of the lessons seen were good or better, showing the benefits of the opportunities staff have had for professional development. When teaching is less than good lessons often lack sparkle or are not pitched at the right level to capture the interest of all students, especially the least able. In these lessons, students do not always receive helpful feedback. In such cases, the school's good policies for teaching, learning and assessment are not being fully applied by teachers.

Students begin school in Year 7 with above average attainment. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 to 13. Standards have risen since the last inspection, significantly so in Year 9 where they are now well above average. However, variations in standards and students' progress still exist between subjects and some of the targets set are too low. Behaviour is generally good throughout the school though some parents are rightly concerned that the behaviour of a small number of immature students is not dealt with firmly enough by some teachers.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average though there is some variation in subject performance. Achievement is satisfactory, with students doing less well at General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS level than at GCE A level, reflecting the national picture. However, current school data indicates higher attainment for the present Year 12 and a predicted slight increase in the proportion of higher grades in Year 13. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and performance data is now being used

efficiently to bring about individual student improvement. This is aided by more tightly structured systems to identify underachievers and the use of targeted interventions to help them make better progress. This is beginning to have a positive impact. Monitoring of performance in different subject areas has also increased. Students' personal development and well-being are good. They have very positive attitudes and demonstrate high levels of confidence and communication skills. They are committed to the school community and enjoy helping younger students in enrichment activities and as peer mentors and buddies. They are also involved in projects with partner primary schools and help to organise fundraising activities. Students speak positively of the variety of teaching styles employed with increased opportunity for group work and independent research. A wide range of GCE AS level and GCE A level courses is taught. Good guidance is given for courses available in partner establishments for those students for whom this traditional route is not appropriate. In addition, the school has well advanced plans to extend its curricular provision with a number of alternative pathways to better meet the needs of all students. An impressive range of enrichment activities contributes greatly to the students' personal development. Students appreciate the care and support they receive from their subject teachers and their personal tutors in individual tutorial and target-setting meetings. They also value the guidance they receive and feel well informed of and prepared for future opportunities. The majority move on to higher education establishments, employment or training, with a high proportion of students going to the establishments of their choice.

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

- Raise attainment further in Years 10 to 13 by setting higher targets and improving consistency in standards between subjects.
- Improve the consistency with which teachers apply the school's policies for securing good classroom behaviour and setting appropriate levels of challenge to students.
- Strengthen further the effectiveness of middle leadership by bringing the capability of all leaders up to that of the best.

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**

Students enter the school in Year 7 with above average prior attainment. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Attainment in Year 9 is now well above the national average and has improved since the last inspection. Standards have improved to broadly average in Year 11, from a lower point two years ago. However, some underachievement remains in some subjects, for example, drama and geography in GCSE. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is now satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average, though there is scope for further improvement. There are some specific differences in attainment between boys and girls but these are particular to year groups and do not indicate a trend of underachievement for either boys or girls. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

The school uses effective strategies to improve standards. It is able to evaluate improvement very effectively through improved tracking and monitoring. Targets have been used in this but have not always been challenging enough, and to secure further improvement their level of challenge needs raising. Achievement and progress have improved and most students talk

purposefully about what they are doing well and how they can improve. Most make good progress in well planned lessons with high expectations. Some students find it harder to make progress because some teachers teach and set work at too high a level for them to understand readily.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students say that they feel safe in school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They consider moral and spiritual issues and develop an understanding of the diversity of cultures and faiths in society through an effective programme of personal and social education, assemblies and religious education. An effective school council seeks the views of students and contributes to developments in the school. The student voice is strong, carefully listened to, and influences the development of policies. Students have opportunities to be members of focus groups for areas such as bullying and healthy living, enabling them to contribute to the development of policies. The school provides opportunities to develop students' sense of responsibility through roles such as peer mentors, student councillors, 'buddies' and prefects. As one student in Year 10 said, 'It gives you responsibility, helps you look after others, helps your speaking and listening, and helps prepare you for being a prefect'. Overall, the contribution made by students to the community is outstanding. Every form group is actively engaged in fundraising activities for their nominated charity. Most students enjoy school and behave well, both in and out of lessons, although some parents are rightly concerned about the behaviour of a few students in some lessons. The school's clear policy for securing good behaviour is not yet applied equally effectively by all staff. Relationships are very good. Students develop a good understanding of how to live healthily through effective tuition in healthy eating and a good programme of sport and physical education. The range of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities is excellent. Attendance is above average and the school is working to improve this further.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some examples of good and outstanding practice. Specialist status in the performing arts has been used well to infuse challenge, variety and enjoyment in lessons throughout the school. In the best lessons, students are highly involved in their learning and well behaved. This is because teachers plan lessons well and make use of imaginative learning activities which take account of students' varied needs and capabilities. Students are also given good opportunities to work independently to clarify their thinking and in pairs and or groups to learn from each other. Relationships are very good and students are inspired and motivated. Clear lesson objectives are also shared with students to monitor and review learning and teaching assistants are used well. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always plan well to stretch students or meet their individual needs. The use of time and sequencing of activities is not always effective and some tasks take too long. Some of these lessons get off to a lively start but the high level of interest of students is not sustained throughout. As a result behaviour sometimes deteriorates. The school has good and improving systems to monitor teaching and learning. There is well targeted training for all staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning, but more is needed to secure the high level of consistency to which the school aspires.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and offers a wide range of opportunities to make progress and attain accreditation, particularly within 'Option K' where, for half a day per week, students can choose to study from a diverse range, including rock climbing and politics. These personalised opportunities have been planned in response to students' requests. They encourage them to take pride in their personal and academic development and help prepare them for life after school. One student in Year 11 spoke eloquently about the confidence he had gained from achieving accreditation in a course on law and was considering tackling a politics course.

In Years 7 to 9, the new personal, learning and thinking skills curriculum, projects and residential trips make learning engaging and appealing to a wide range of students. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported in making progress. In Years 10 to 11, the engineering and social health diplomas are well established and the school has plans to extend these further by developing the already established Young Apprenticeship scheme. The range of extra-curricular activities offered to students is outstanding, well supported by most areas of the performing arts specialism, and includes sporting and cultural activities. The focus in the curriculum on exercise and personal health is strengthened significantly by these extensive activities. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural activities is good, with group work observed in English and drama lessons which enabled students, for example, to reflect on the nature of humanity in the Holocaust.

The headteacher and the senior leadership team are leading improvement with determination and creativity, and are involving all students in this journey. Students feel involved in shaping the curriculum and are committed to doing their best within it. Impact on improvement is clear. The senior team is working to ensure that the effectiveness of pastoral and subject leaders, and their capacity to support each other, improves further. This is variable at present but staff and students speak highly of the growing ethos in which both the academic achievement and pastoral care are seen as two sides of the same coin.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and contributes well to students' personal development and well-being. One student, reflecting a typical view, stated that, 'Support at the school is second to none.' Systems to secure health, safety and safeguarding, including that of child protection and checking staff on appointment, are good. A very close check is kept on the welfare of all students and there are strong links with outside agencies to support this work. The newly established 'inclusion resource centre' to support the more vulnerable students is helping to increase the range and quality of care. Good advice and guidance arrangements enable students to make a smooth transition from one stage of their education to the next. The school's recently established tracking system is helping to improve academic guidance to ensure that all students achieve as well as they can.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management have improved significantly over the last few years and are now good. The headteacher has brought vision, transparency and energy to the task of modernising the school's management practices, developing an atmosphere in which staff collaborate and evaluate their practice very well, and focusing the school's efforts on raising standards by improving teaching, learning, assessment and the tracking of students' progress. In this she is supported by a strong governing body and a capable senior leadership team. The latter, though currently under strength due to the long-term illness of one of its members, works in a sharply focused way to help lead the school's successful campaign for improvement. Middle leaders also contribute well to improvement. They have ample authority to lead, make decisions, coach staff and to be accountable for the performance of themselves, their colleagues and the students in their areas of responsibility. However, this good practice is not yet evident across the whole range of middle leadership. Consultation is extensive. Staff and students feel that their views are listened to by leaders and used to influence policies. The school's evaluation of its performance is excellent and based on comprehensive data and a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are well aware of the school's performance and of its current priorities for development. Morale is high. There is a palpable keenness to improve performance and a willingness to accept advice from senior staff on what and how to improve. In this, the school has been well supported by training and advice from outside, including from the local authority, as well as by the many projects in which staff have worked together to devise improved practice. On this basis, and given its strong leadership and management, the school has a good capacity to improve further and the clear ambition to do so. The school is an orderly place. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Race, gender and disability policies and practices are reviewed and legal requirements are met. The school's overall contribution to community cohesion is good. There is strong evidence of cohesion within the school, with its local community and through its international links. Communications with parents are extensive, not least in the amount and frequency of information provided on the progress of students. Inspectors disagree with the critical view expressed by a few parents about these communications. The school has benefited significantly from the enhanced accommodation and equipment gained from being a specialist performing arts school. It manages its finances and premises very well. The school gives good value for money.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which 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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
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	2

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	1	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**

After our visit to your school I would like to tell you of our findings.

- Malbank is a satisfactory school with many good features.
- It has improved a great deal in the last two years and has a good capacity to improve further.
- The school is well managed and gives you a safe and secure place in which to learn and develop.
- Your achievement is improving and, for example, students in Year 9 are now reaching standards which are well above the national average. Standards for older students are average but improving.
- You work hard and the vast majority of you behave maturely and get on very well with each other and the staff. You are proud to be Malbank students and you think highly of the school.
- The school gives you good care and advice.
- You have a good range of subjects to study and the extra-curricular activities are excellent. Many of you clearly enjoy these and gain a great deal from them.
- Staff listen very carefully to your ideas and you are given good opportunities to influence how the school is run.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, some is good and some is outstanding.

Staff and governors are very keen to improve the school further and we believe that the school needs to do the following to help with this:

- improve examination results in Years 10 to 13
- improve teaching and behaviour in the lessons which fall short of being good
- ensure that all of the school's managers become as effective as the majority already are.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future studies and activities at Malbank.