

Mount Grace High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120240
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339646
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	604
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Herbert
Headteacher	J R Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding, communications with parents, records of governor meetings and 381 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils, particularly the more able, and the link with the challenge in teaching
- how effectively the school tailors its provision to meet the needs of different groups of pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in bringing about improvement.

Information about the school

This middle school is of average size. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average. A few pupils join the school at the very early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Working in collaboration with other local schools, a science specialist status has recently been achieved.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Mount Grace is a good school with a distinctive character stemming from the approachability of the school's leadership team. Their success in promoting an admirable set of values is a noteworthy feature of this constantly improving school. Pupils and their parents were highly positive about almost every aspect of the school. This is hardly surprising because every outcome was found to be at least good. The school's outstanding quality of care, support and guidance is a major factor in ensuring pupils feel exceptionally safe. The vast majority of pupils behave very well and discourage poor behaviour when this occasionally occurs. All pupils achieve well. The school does particularly well in ensuring that those with special needs and/or disabilities, and the small numbers of pupils who arrive speaking very little English, make the same good progress as other pupils.

Teaching and learning are good and the school's focus on ensuring better use of assessment in lessons is resulting in continuing improvement. Most teachers enable pupils to recognise what they must do to achieve their challenging targets. In a minority of lessons, there is less progress because teachers do not meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the more able. The good curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment and is increasingly well adapted as part of the school's strong commitment to equal opportunities. Although very recent, the school's specialism in science has already stimulated thinking about how pupils can learn in different ways.

There is strong shared vision because leaders know their school well and set a very good example through their deeds and the effective communication of the school's values. They contribute exceptionally well to pupils' moral and social development. Pupils have a commendable grasp of right and wrong and strive to be constructive members of the community. They are very keen to take on even more responsibility, for instance in campaigning for healthier lifestyles. There are strengths in the school's approach to community cohesion at the local and international level. Pupils are taught about different cultures but there are few opportunities for them to interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds. The school has correctly recognised that not all of the policies related to teaching and learning have been consistently implemented.

Assessment information is used well in English, mathematics and science to hold middle leaders to account. The track record of improvement is good, as seen in the improved outcomes for more able pupils and the better results in English. Much has been done to overcome the barriers to learning for pupils who are potentially vulnerable. These improvements and the school's accurate self-review are evidence that Mount Grace has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by
 - consulting with staff, governors, pupils and parents and updating the school's teaching and learning policy
 - systematically monitoring the implementation of this policy and involving all parties in this process
 - ensuring the same levels of accountability in foundation subjects as currently exist in English, mathematics and science.
 - Improve community cohesion by
 - completing a fuller audit of this aspect
 - developing further priorities in response to this, for instance in providing opportunities for pupils to interact with people from different communities in this country.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Lower and average attaining pupils make the most rapid progress because work in lessons is pitched at the right level for them and there is good quality additional support available if it is needed. Pupils are responding very positively to the additional lessons aimed at improving basic literacy skills. Pupils were observed working at a good pace and showed confidence and willingness to improve their work. More able learners demonstrated a pride in being able to produce their best work. In the less effective lessons, more able pupils did not have this opportunity.

The school has sustained above average levels of attainment in mathematics and science since 2003. In the past, pupils have made less progress in English but decisive action taken by the school is beginning to reduce the disparity. End of key stage assessments in 2009 were above average in English. In the past two years pupils are attaining at higher levels in a range of foundation subjects.

Effective transition arrangements are in place so that pupils joining the school in Year 7 begin to make progress as soon as they arrive. Successful collaboration with the upper school ensures pupils transfer smoothly into Year 10. The school has a consistently good record in ensuring boys' attainment matches that of the girls.

Pupils take part in at least the minimum recommended amount of physical education each week. Pupils were candid in their admission that healthy eating choices are not always made but there is considerable enthusiasm to campaign to improve the health of the community. Pupils develop well the skills they need for the future. There have been recent improvements to pupils' literacy and financial management skills. Year 9 pupils are very positive about how they are informed about courses available in the upper school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons take place in a calm, well-ordered atmosphere. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils. The better lessons have clear objectives that are reviewed at regular intervals, often combined with opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress. Group work and independent learning are common and a good range of resources are used so there is not an over-reliance on teacher talk. The less successful lessons are pitched at the middle and do not challenge all pupils, particularly the most able.

Virtually all pupils are aware of their levels and what they must do to reach their targets. Many teachers are planning lessons based on accurate assessments and including a range of strategies to ensure all pupils consider key questions. Although there are many examples of effective marking and feedback, this is inconsistent across the school.

The curriculum makes school interesting for pupils. The life skills programme is a strength because it develops the attributes pupils need for learning and is broadening the range of teaching approaches. There is growing provision for the gifted and talented; for instance, an increasing opportunity for some to take GCSEs early. There is a wide range of enrichment activity with good levels of participation. The school is also taking steps to ensure the students with the greatest need benefit from such activity. High levels of success in inter-school competitions, is building a pride in the school. Good quality collaboration with the upper school is reflected in a more flexible transition

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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into courses normally associated with Year 10 and 11. The school's international links have resulted in pupils interacting with Zambian people, including a former president. Links between subjects are developing so pupils are having increased opportunity to apply their learning.

Relationships are excellent so even the very youngest pupils are at ease speaking to the senior staff about any concerns. These strong relationships are established early because of the very thorough transition arrangements organised with the feeder primary schools. The very high quality care is the reason why virtually all pupils feel very safe. Year 9 pupils feel very confident about moving to the upper school because of the effective guidance the school provides.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have secured the strong support of staff in their quest to improve the school. The high ambition the school has for improvement is reflected in the challenging targets that are particularly evident in English, mathematics and science. Heads of these subjects are very strongly motivated by the school's effective use of data. There is less accountability in other subjects, although the school is developing a comparable target based system to ensure an equally robust approach. The school has a convincing record of spotting groups that are doing less well and implementing strategies to ensure this is corrected. For instance, the school has introduced additional physical activities for girls in response to findings that boys take more exercise. The school is improving its use of data so it can implement its equal opportunities policies even more effectively.

The work on assessment is improving teaching. However, inconsistencies at middle leadership level are resulting in uneven implementation of these strategies. The school has robust systems in place to ensure pupils' safeguarding, and staff make this a high priority. Governors influence the strategic direction of the school, for example, in taking action to ensure better leadership. Their commitment to the welfare of staff and pupils is illustrated by the seriousness with which they also approach their role in safeguarding. The school works well with parents and growing links with other organisations are being used to improve the outcomes for all pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires were returned from the majority of parents. The vast majority of parents are happy with their child's experience at school and think that the school is well managed. Almost all parents agree that the school keeps their child safe and that teaching is good in the school. The very large majority of parents agree with all the other statements. Just over a tenth of parents did not agree with the statement that the school helps parents to support their child's learning. Inspectors investigated this and judge that the school does a good job keeping parents informed of how well their child is progressing but that more work could be undertaken to help parents support their child's learning. Inspectors also discovered that the school has plans in place to address this.

The majority of comments made by parents were positive with quite a number mentioning the effectiveness of the headteacher and how much their child enjoyed school. The small number of critical comments received all related to different individual issues.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mount Grace High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 381 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 633 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	144	38	211	55	21	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	152	40	213	56	13	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	130	34	214	56	23	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	128	34	224	59	12	3	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	143	34	221	58	3	1	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	91	24	236	62	37	10	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	96	25	244	64	25	7	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	133	35	213	56	5	1	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	119	31	233	61	13	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	139	36	195	51	24	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	90	24	226	59	16	4	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	189	50	169	44	5	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	165	49	165	49	2	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mount Grace High School, Hinkley, LE10 1LP

I wanted to let you know the main outcomes of the recent inspection of your school.

First, I would like to thank those pupils who we met with for their perceptive comments about the school. We agreed with the views you expressed and concluded that yours is a good and improving school. We identified many strengths.

The emphasis given to teaching the Mount Grace values encourages you to be considerate of the needs of others.

All of you achieve well and you really enjoy your lessons.

You behave well and actively discourage actions by a minority that reduce your opportunities to learn.

Much of the teaching successfully involves you in working towards your individual challenging targets.

You are very well cared for and supported, particularly when transferring from your primary schools and to the upper school.

Staff, parents and pupils are highly supportive of the school.

To further improve the school we have identified that teaching should be more consistently good and outstanding. To achieve this we have suggested that the school involves you in helping to agree on what is effective teaching and learning, and in helping to monitor this. The other key issue is to do with how you are prepared for life in modern Britain. We think there is scope for providing you with more opportunities to interact with different communities.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools

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