

Maryhill High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124405
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340560
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	803
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Mack
Headteacher	Dr Alan Jones
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
School address	Gloucester Road Kidsgrove Stoke on Trent
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The majority of the time was spent looking at learning, including visits to 42 lessons, four small elements of lessons and observing 44 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at its tracking information, governors' minutes, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, subject evaluations and school action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 304 parent and carer questionnaires, 15 staff questionnaires and 127 student questionnaires.

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

- how improvements to the provision within the sixth form has brought about improvements to standards
- how effective subject leadership has been in improving the quality of learning within departments
- how standards in science have improved since the previous inspection
- how well attainment information is used to ensure work is well matched to students' abilities.

Information about the school

Maryhill High School is a media arts specialist college. The vast majority of students are from a White British background. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average and, while the school serves an area with some elements of social advantage, there are other indicators which identify less favourable circumstances. The school has a number of awards including the local authority inclusion quality mark. The proportion of students with special education needs and/or disabilities is average but the proportion with a statement of special education needs is above average. The number of students in the sixth form is relatively small and provision is shared with a neighbouring school. In December 2007, the school had an Ofsted monitoring visit for schools identified as satisfactory in their last full inspection.

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

When the school received a monitoring visit in December 2007, the report judged that much of the work to improve was in the early stages of development. This work has now become embedded within the school so that it now provides a good standard of education.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are average and improving. Students make good progress. The leadership team, and particularly the deputy headteacher, have been instrumental in ensuring subject leadership has improved. In many subject areas, leadership is good but it remains inconsistent in quality, especially when leaders are relatively new in role. Heads of department have worked well with their teams. They are held to account by senior leaders and they in turn hold their department colleagues to account for their work. This, along with good professional development, has brought about improvements to the quality of teaching, which is now generally good. In subjects where teaching remains satisfactory this is often because leaders do not make the connection between good teaching and good learning and, hence, do not identify sharply enough practice which needs to improve.

Behaviour is good; students are polite, considerate to staff and to each other and take an active part in their own learning. The good curriculum is well matched to the needs of students, and is particularly supportive for students who find learning difficult. Staff know the students very well and are able to offer highly effective guidance. Target setting is particularly strong with students knowing their targets, the level of their work at present and how well they are likely to achieve if they carry on progressing at the same rate. Staff are also good at identifying how students could improve and linking these to specific targets. This is very well demonstrated within science. A strength of the school is the way in which looked after children and students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are extremely well supported and how well the school works with outside agencies. Students make an excellent contribution to the local community through their media specialism, for example designing a well received web site to support a local charity working on informing the public of the issues of prostate cancer. The school makes effective use of its specialist areas. Many lessons make good use of the interactive boards and also media clips as well as including consideration for the media as part of the lesson. The school radio is effective in improving internal communication within the school as well as being an integral part of the school day. The sixth form has also improved and is now provides a satisfactory standard of education, although standards in the sixth form are low. Teaching has improved but does not consistently ensure good progress and does not build upon the good work to improve the quality of teaching in the main school.

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The strong drive to improve has ensured greater accountability. Students take part in subject reviews and work closely with the governing body through a representative in each key stage. All areas identified as being in need of improvement at the time of the last inspection have got better. Results in science, which were very poor have improved and are broadly average, as well as students having the opportunity to study separate sciences at GCSE. Governance has also improved. Governors have a good understanding of the school's comprehensive and accurate self-evaluation and are able to challenge from an informed viewpoint. Consequently, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further within the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - all lessons consistently challenge students so that they make good, or better, progress
 - the variety of teaching methodologies that have been effective in engaging students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are, when appropriate, used within sixth form lessons.
- Improve the consistency of leadership across subjects by ensuring all leaders:
 - accurately identify how effective teaching is in securing good learning
 - are better able to identify weaknesses and bring about improvements.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students start at school with standards which are below average. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 and reach broadly average standards. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved and are average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen significantly since 2007. The school beat its targets for the proportion of students gaining three or more A* or A grades and met, or was close to meeting, its challenging targets in its specialist areas of media and art. English, which is also a designated specialist subject, also met its target. Over time, students make good progress. This is confirmed by observations of lessons during the inspection, which show that learning is good across both key stages. Module and GCSE results already achieved by students are also very positive. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because they receive very good support and guidance. Students enjoy school because they are successful with their work and achieve well.

Students feel safe. The school has highly effective systems to identify any inappropriate language, bullying or racist activities, for example while students are using the internet. There have been very few racially motivated incidents or exclusions. Most students behave well and know how to conduct themselves in lessons. Bullying is rare and victims receive effective support. Students have a very good understanding of moral issues. This is because lessons often include moral elements for example making paper bags to

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replicate life in an Indian village during geography. Students know how to live healthily. They have positive attitudes to taking exercise and as a result, the uptake of extra-curricular sport and other fitness activities is high. They also often consider health elements within lessons. For example, when studying fashion in French, students were considering the impact of the fashion industry on young girls, in relation to issues such as anorexia and bulimia.

Good social development enables students to make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. This includes working closely with governors and making an input into departmental reviews. Students have also sung at a local home for the elderly and support local residents with information communication technology. There is a strong and uncontrived spiritual element to many lessons. For example, students were observed discussing different beliefs about the creation of the world within science. Themed days are used effectively to enhance students' good cultural understanding. The day based around Da Vinci was very well received. Students enjoyed working on codes, painting and making and testing models of catapults or flying machines. Attendance has improved and is average and is a strong focus for the school to improve further. Students take part in a wide variety of work related activities and experiences which prepares them well for their futures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

Students are able to follow a wide variety of courses in Key Stage 4. These include appropriate vocational courses such as hairdressing, health and social care and the creative and media diploma. Preparations are well established to introduce other diploma lines. Good support and guidance ensures talented pupils, or those for whom the curriculum is not appropriate, are consulted, along with their parents, to arrive at jointly agreed alternatives. These are appreciated by students who achieve basic qualifications, enjoy increased self-esteem and potentially improve their future economic well-being. Students of all abilities say they are extremely well supported in making their choices. The introduction of media studies in Key Stage 3 and the increased emphasis on modern foreign languages helps prepare students to identify the opportunities of studying these in Key Stage 4 as well as enhancing their literacy skills.

The curriculum is enhanced through a variety of additional education experiences. Students enjoy a good range of extra-curricular activities that include sport, and creative and performing arts. Enterprise days provide students with a breadth of experience contributing effectively to their personal development. A good range of visits and visitors develops a better understanding of relevant local and national issues, for example, a speaker explored stereotypical racist attitudes in such a way as to make it memorable and highly pertinent for students.

The impact of recent and relevant training to enhance the quality of teaching by extending the curriculum within subjects is very evident in many subjects. Lessons often involve group or practical work. Students are able to discuss their very personal beliefs without being ridiculed. This demonstrates mutual trust and respect and good relationships between staff and students. Teaching in the large majority of lessons observed was good because it is well matched to students' aptitudes and abilities. When teaching is satisfactory there is often too much teacher input, lower expectations with students being passive and not sufficiently involved in their learning.

Students know their targets. In many lessons assessment is used very effectively to identify the level at which students are working and involving them in understanding how well they are progressing. They are then advised on what they must do to reach their target grade. The strong pastoral care ensures students are well supported across a variety of areas. Excellent provision for the welfare of students is through the student support services leader and the special educational needs coordinator, who work highly effectively alongside the family support worker, learning mentors, the attendance officer and the school counsellor. The school also takes good care to make sure students are able to deal with the stresses and strains of examinations.

Year 7 students say they were prepared well for school prior to arriving and then supported well when they started in September. In other years students spoke well on how they were prepared for the next phase of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders give a strong steer and direction and their vision and ambition for the school is well understood and shared by staff. The strong drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning, led by the deputy headteacher, has ensured that most subject leaders hold their departmental colleagues to account for the quality and impact of their work. This has been effective in most departments. The rate of improvement amongst middle managers has been more variable. In the best examples, there is a clear departmental understanding of what constitutes good practice and a strong commitment to carry on improving. However, in a few subject areas the changes have not been fully implemented and subject leaders have not evaluated the impact of developments on the provision within the department or the extent to which standards are rising. This is because some subject leaders are relatively new to middle management.

Governance has improved and is good. Governors are supportive of the school and have appropriate structures in place. They challenge the school and evaluate the impact of their policies and this includes gaining the views of student representatives. They have been very rigorous in ensuring that effective safeguarding procedures have been fully implemented. Governors have also been very active in ensuring the school gives good support to the local community. The school also has good international links and links to enable students to gain a better understanding of multi-cultural Britain have recently been enhanced by working with a school within Stoke.

The comprehensive analysis of examination data, both historical and predictive, and the identification of any underperforming individuals or groups, has enabled the school to secure good equality of opportunity. This analysis includes the performance of groups with differing social and educational needs and ensures that most remain on track to meet the challenging targets that the school sets for them, especially as they progress through their GCSE years. It also enables senior staff to quickly identify and support any who are falling behind. The school gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2

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	
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The leadership of the school has worked hard and effectively to improve the effectiveness of the sixth form so that it is now judged to be satisfactory. Overall students enter the sixth form with standards below average and whilst standards in A level examinations have risen, they are still below average.

Students receive good independent advice and guidance and are aware that, if the sixth form is not the best place for them to further their education, they will be advised and supported. Students feel safe and secure and they enjoy the challenges of sixth form life. They respond well to some good, but mainly satisfactory, teaching. The quality of teaching and the curriculum have both improved since the previous inspection, in part because of good cooperation with the neighbouring high school. Teachers now use assessment information more effectively. However in some lessons teachers do not set short term goals for students, so that the pace of learning is slower and progress not as good. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and consists of mainly level 3 courses. The school works well in partnership with a neighbouring school to offer a wider variety of options. Tracking systems have improved and data are now used more effectively to help support student progress. Students know their target grades and generally know what they need to do to improve them. This also means that if any students are identified as studying an inappropriate course they can quickly be advised and supported in changing.

Progress is satisfactory but there are some areas where progress is slower than expected. Leadership has improved and is satisfactory. While leaders have a clear understanding of the subjects where progress is slower, they have not identified precisely the reasons why.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A high number of responses were received, indicating the good links between school and home. The responses were very much in line with the school's own questionnaire to which over 500 parents and carers had responded. Responses were generally very positive, with most saying that their child enjoyed school. Good support for students with special education needs and/or disabilities was identified as a strength of the school and one parent commented: 'The school has been marvellous at accommodating ... and helping him access what other children of his age would experience.'

Poor behaviour in a few classes, bullying and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching were raised as issues by a very small number of parents. The inspection team found behaviour to be good, although they were aware from students that there are very rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour, especially when classes were not taken by their regular teacher. Students said very occasional incidents of bullying were dealt with effectively by staff and, while there were some lessons which were not as good as others, the inspection team found that overall the quality of teaching was good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Maryhill 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 304 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 803 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	30	189	62	18	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	116	38	179	59	7	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	154	51	133	44	13	4	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	105	35	170	56	24	8	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	68	22	198	65	26	9	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	66	22	199	65	30	10	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	17	209	69	30	10	6	2
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)	85	28	181	60	21	7	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	28	189	62	19	6	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	27	162	53	37	12	10	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	17	198	65	25	8	8	3
The school is led and managed effectively	82	27	191	63	14	5	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	118	46	118	46	16	6	5	2

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.



5 February 2010

Dear Students,

Inspection of Maryhill High School, Stoke on Trent, ST7 4DL

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues, we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were impressed with how well you behaved and with the outstanding contribution you make to the life of the school and local community. You told us that your school has improved. Indeed, one of you said in your questionnaire: 'School has improved and is more focused on pushing us to achieve high. Teachers are giving better feedback.' We agree and have judged that your school is now good.

You make good progress. Results in your examinations are improving and standards are average. Sixth form students now make satisfactory progress, although A level results are still below average. We have asked your school to improve these. We observed nearly all teachers and we judged that teaching is generally good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. We saw some good assessment, including good questioning and teachers' feedback and marking. You really enjoy lessons which involve you with practical activities and group work. We were pleased to see how many lessons made relevant and interesting links between subjects, for example when you illustrated poems studied in English during an art lesson. In the sixth form, you do not get as many lessons like this, so we have asked the school to extend these, where appropriate, to the sixth form.

Staff care for you very well, and make sure you are able to go forward to the next stage of your education as well as helping you to settle at the start of Year 7. You enjoy the social side of school as well as being an arts and media school. I know one of the inspectors enjoyed being interviewed on your radio station. You have a very good understanding of your local area. We were particularly impressed by how many of you took part in the extra-curricular sports that are available. Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and they are very determined that these improvements will be made. They are supported by some good subject leaders but subject leadership is inconsistent, so in a few areas, improvements are not progressing as well. Again, this is an area we have asked the school to improve, by ensuring that all staff with leadership roles analyse

teaching and how it relates to your learning, so they can be more accurate in identifying what needs to be improved.

We wish you well at this very supportive school

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith Her Majesty's Inspector

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