

Maricourt Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104960
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	301966
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1479
6th form	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sister Mary Magdalen
Headteacher	Sister Mary Teresa
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Hall Lane Maghull Liverpool Merseyside L31 3DZ
Telephone number	0151 3303366
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Age group	11–18
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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

Maricourt is a larger than average secondary school located on two sites in Maghull to the north of Liverpool. The school takes pupils from a wide area which includes Kirkby, Knowsley and Liverpool. A smaller than average proportion of pupils is eligible to receive free school meals. Pupils are predominantly White British and there are very few pupils whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is below average. Specialist status for mathematics and computing was awarded in 2004. The school has achieved a number of nationally and locally recognised awards including the Sportsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Maricourt is a good school and there are some aspects of its work that are outstanding, particularly in the support and guidance that it gives to pupils. Throughout their time at Maricourt, pupils have their academic progress and their effort and application to their work assessed and tracked rigorously. Teachers accurately identify those pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their studies and take effective action to support them both academically and pastorally. As a result of this support, and a very good system of setting and revising targets, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and less able pupils make outstanding progress.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with slightly above average levels in national tests. They make good progress to reach standards which are above those expected for their age. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above the national average in mathematics and well above average in English. Pupils' progress is accelerated further in Key Stage 4 so that by the time they leave Year 11 they achieve GCSE results that are above average for 16 year-olds. More than two thirds of pupils achieve five or more A to C grades in GCSE examinations, although a smaller than average proportion attain the highest grades A* and A. The most able pupils therefore are not doing as well in relation to their capability as the majority.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards and the impressive sound and lighting equipment and small studios in the performing arts building. The school has made good improvements to lessons to focus on how pupils learn best. In some lessons, however, pupils are inactive and do not have the opportunity to extend their thinking through independent learning, problem solving or using information and communication technology (ICT). This means that sometimes more able pupils are not challenged or extended as much as they could be.

The curriculum is good and is enriched by a wide range and high number of out-of-hours activities and clubs. At Key Stage 4 there is a good range of GCSE courses which includes vocational options and the school collaborates well with other schools and colleges to enhance this provision. Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy coming to school, generally behave well and their attendance is higher than the national average for secondary schools. Pupils say they feel safe and that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively, and most parents agree with this view. Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles is good, they take regular exercise and participate in two hours of physical education (PE) a week. Pupils develop good social skills, they show respect for adults and take responsibilities readily, for example as form captains, school councillors, peer mediators and sport leaders. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are good and they have good opportunities to develop vocational skills and experience the world of work and this enables them to be well-placed for their future working lives.

The school's Catholic ethos is strong and runs through all of its work. The headteacher successfully leads a tight knit team of staff who are focused on a shared vision. She has a caring approach and constantly seeks to innovate and improve provision in order to raise standards further. The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing is being used well to improve resources and the quality of teaching and learning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection to the curriculum, school accommodation and in the leadership of subjects. Middle and senior leaders effectively monitor, evaluate and improve their departments

and have a commitment to continual improvement. Parents' responses in questionnaires show an overwhelming support for the school and the school fully deserves its good reputation locally. It has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management of the sixth form have resulted in improvements in attendance, students' personal development and in the percentage of passes in GCE A level and AS level examinations. Although standards in 2006 were slightly lower than the national average, particularly in GCE AS level examinations, it is clear that recent improvements to teaching and learning and the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact. Achievement over time, considering students' starting points, is good. A smaller than average proportion of students, however, attain the highest grades of A or B in examinations. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects and they use varied activities and resources to capture students' interest. Students recognise that they have greater opportunities to actively participate in lessons. In some lessons, however, students have fewer opportunities to take an active role, to learn independently or to extend their thinking. The good curriculum offers a wide range of academic courses and a broader range of vocational choices in order to better meet the needs of all students.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They, for example, take the opportunity to make frequent use of the well-equipped fitness suite and are mature, rounded young adults who express their views and considered opinions with confidence. They enjoy helping younger students and are generous in raising money for charitable causes. They have good opportunities to work with local businesses, higher education institutions and colleges and are well prepared for higher education and the world of work. Students feel they are very well cared for, supported and guided and that their voice is heard.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the highest GCSE and GCE A level grades.
- Continue to improve the quality of lessons so that pupils are more challenged, take greater responsibility and are more actively involved in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards that pupils reach are consistently above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. At GCE A level, standards are broadly average. For the most part, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress in relation to their capabilities whilst the most able generally make satisfactory progress.

In Key Stage 3, standards are well above the national average in English with over half of pupils achieving higher levels than those expected for pupils of a similar age. Standards are similarly high in mathematics, a lead subject in the school's specialist status, with two thirds of pupils achieving levels that are higher than expected for their age. Standards are high in other subjects such as history, design and technology, and PE. Boys' attainment in Key Stage 3 is above the

national average and the progress they make is better than the progress that boys make nationally. Although girls' attainment is higher than the boys', their progress is not as rapid.

In Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress and gain above average results in GCSE examinations. More than two thirds of pupils achieve five or more A to C grades, although the proportion who achieve A* or A grades is smaller than average. This is because in some lessons pupils are not challenged enough and their thinking is not fully extended. At GCSE boys' attainment and the progress that they make is better than for boys nationally.

Achievement in the sixth form is good. Despite the fact that in 2006, students attained grades that were below the national average in their AS examinations, there are good signs that improvements to teaching are having an impact. Current standards in Year 12, for example, are average and improving, and the proportion of higher attaining pupils in Year 13 has increased.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

In lessons pupils are well behaved, compliant and show high levels of respect to adults and this reflects their good spiritual, moral and social development. They have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and take the system of restorative justice and peer mediation seriously. Pupils' cultural development is less well developed as there are limited opportunities to learn about other cultures. Pupils are friendly and welcoming and their behaviour around school is generally good. They state that they feel safe and free from intimidation and harassment. They say that any allegations of bullying or poor behaviour are acted upon effectively by school staff. The programmes of work for personal, social, health and citizenship lessons are excellent and this enables pupils to learn the importance of keeping safe and making safe choices. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and have valuable opportunities to exercise responsibility. In one example, pupils in the popular Scalextric club organised the funding, the leadership and the organisation of the club themselves. Pupils undertake extra work to help raise money for local and national charities and charitable causes; for instance, pupils in Year 10 joined a project to provide books for pupils in Tanzania. They are well prepared for the challenges of the workplace and leave school with good basic skills in English, mathematics and ICT. Their independent learning skills, however, are less well developed.

Students in the sixth form have outstanding personal development. They organise and manage the school council, serve the community by helping at parents meetings, induction days for Year 6 pupils and by undertaking a voluntary service in a local hospital. They have mature and considered views and have confidence to articulate and explain them to others whilst at the same time respecting other people's opinions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school is implementing strategies to further improve the quality of teaching and this is beginning to have an impact particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives which are generally

shared with pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain concepts well and direct tasks and activities skillfully. Relationships are positive and teachers give high quality individual support to pupils. The school has recently had a drive to improve assessment. It has introduced a new marking policy which has been successful and, as a result, pupils are clear about the strengths and weaknesses in their work. Pupils are sometimes less clear about exactly what they need to do next to improve it. The initiative of using self and peer assessment is beginning to have an impact on the progress that pupils make. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to focus attention and engage pupils but ICT is not used as an integral part of learning in all subjects. Many lessons are dominated by teacher talk and this results in more able pupils having limited opportunities to extend their thinking, to solve problems or to work independently. The tasks that pupils are asked to complete in some lessons lack challenge, relevance and are insufficiently stimulating. Teaching for less able pupils and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. Lessons build well on these pupils' prior learning and enable them to make rapid progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

A good range of curriculum activities meets the needs, abilities and interests of pupils. Improvements to the curriculum at Key Stage 3 have been successfully made to address the issues highlighted in the last inspection. There is good provision across the curriculum to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Curricular opportunities have been enhanced by developments to the school's accommodation; for example, the purpose-built performing arts building and recording studio enables pupils to develop their musical, performance and ICT skills. There is a good range of GCSE and GCE A-level options and pupils whose skills suit vocational learning have their needs well met through the provision of work-based courses. Pupils' business skills are developed through a structured programme which includes enterprise days. All learners take part in a work experience programme. The curriculum is further enriched by opportunities to compete in local and national competitions; the school recently won a local authority competition for enterprise. All pupils benefit from a well-constructed programme of day and residential visits. In Year 9 for example, pupils benefit from attending a retreat. There is also a residential visit to Spain for students in Year 12 to get work experience at the same time as developing their language skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive targeted teaching designed to address their particular needs. Other pupils are also carefully tracked and monitored to ensure that they are making good progress. All pupils know their targets for improvement. Pupils receive excellent on-going advice and guidance in choosing their options, and in selecting their future careers, and the school is very effective in supporting their academic and pastoral needs. Induction procedures for new pupils are strong as are procedures for ensuring a smooth transition between different key stages in the school. These factors are instrumental in the good progress pupils make. Exceptional care is offered to the most vulnerable pupils and there are strong links with external agencies. The system of risk assessment and procedures for training staff in child protection have improved since the

last inspection and appropriate measures are in place to safeguard pupils including the required checks on staff appointments. In the sixth form, a very effective tutorial system had been established which supports students' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good and leaders at all levels set a clear direction to ensure the school continues to raise standards and promote high quality care. The long-standing headteacher is well-respected. She is well supported by an experienced and capable senior leadership team. She successfully empowers other managers in the school through challenge, professional development, coaching and support. The recent focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning is having a positive impact. Performance management is targeted well to areas identified within the school improvement plan. The process of school improvement planning is good. Subject leaders are increasingly evaluating the performance of their departments. The monitoring of lessons is good although some judgements are generous and focused on what teachers do rather than on what pupils learn.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and provide the school with dedicated support and valuable challenge. Areas for improvement from the previous report have largely been addressed. Problems with the logistics of having a school on two sites have been effectively minimised. The school gives good value for money and shows good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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 disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, Maricourt was inspected by Ofsted on June 20 and 21. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for taking time to talk to us and tell us your views of the school. We were particularly impressed with the respect that you showed to adults and visitors. We agree with you and with your parents that Maricourt is a good school which supports you very well to achieve results that are above the average for the country. The school tracks your progress very closely to make sure you do as well as you should. You attend well, your behaviour is good and you make full use of the excellent range of activities available outside school hours, including the impressive Scalextric club and the Youth Mercy association. The new options that have been available to those of you in Year 10 give you both traditional and work-based learning opportunities that will meet your needs when you leave school.

We have asked the school to improve some aspects of its work and you can help and play your part in that to help the school to improve further. At present a smaller than average proportion attain the highest grades at GCSE, A level and AS level examinations. We have asked the school to increase that proportion. In some lessons that we observed we noted that you don't have many opportunities to develop independent learning skills, such as problem solving, thinking skills and research. We felt that you could be challenged more so we have asked the school to continue to improve lessons so that you are more actively involved in your learning.

We wish you well for the future.