

The Mary Webb School and Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123577
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340373
Inspection dates	9–10 June 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	570
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Walton
Headteacher	Andrew Smith
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They visited 33 lessons and observed 32 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at the minutes of the meetings of governing body, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, subject evaluations, and college action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 250 parent and carer questionnaires, 38 staff questionnaires and 109 student questionnaires.

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

- how effective teaching is to ensure that students now make good progress in lessons and across time
- how effectively leadership, at all levels, has brought about sustained improvement to the quality of provision
- how well the school meets the students' needs for religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4.

Information about the school

The Mary Webb School and Science College is a smaller-than-average school which serves a large rural area. The large majority of students travel by bus to school. It works in partnership with secondary schools and colleges in the Shrewsbury area. The vast majority of students are from a White British background with very few from other backgrounds or who do not speak English as their first language. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals or with special education needs and/or disabilities are below average, although the proportion with a statement of special education needs is above average. A new headteacher took up post in September 2008.

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

Mary Webb is a good school. The leadership of the school has empowered staff so that they are all committed to continually improving the quality of teaching and increasing the rate of learning. Leaders at all levels are effective in holding staff to account and providing highly successful support to bring about improvements. Standards are above average and progress is good, given the broadly average starting points when students start school. Many improvements have been made, although as yet some have to become firmly established over a number of years. The school has a well established and shared ambition to continue this momentum so that it can be judged outstanding in the future. There is an accurate appraisal of how well it is achieving and a well-formulated improvement plan to ensure it meets these high expectations. These demonstrate a good and improving capacity to improve further.

Teaching and assessment have improved and are now good with many outstanding practitioners. Assessment is used well in many lessons to inform students how to improve. The specialist area of science has been instrumental in supporting improvements in teaching as well as providing good support for local schools. A highlight of lessons and of the work of the school is the excellent relationships between staff and students. Staff know their charges very well and offer excellent care and support. As a result, students respond well in lessons, make a good contribution to their own learning and their behaviour is good. They enjoy school and show mature attitudes. The concentration by the school on improving students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that nearly all lessons include an element of these, and consequently students have a very good understanding of these areas. Through the active student voice they make a very good contribution to the life of the school as well as contributing well to the local community. However, students' understanding and experience of life in multicultural Britain and across the world is less well developed.

The art work seen within the school is of the highest standard and it is of no surprise that much of the students' work is used to adorn offices and public spaces at the Guildhall. The school has rightly recognised that the present curriculum, while satisfactory, lacks breadth and has limited time for students to study ICT and religious education in Key Stage 4. As a result, there are plans to significantly alter the curriculum from September with more lessons a week and greater opportunities for students to cover a wider range of subjects. There are a number of extra-curricular events and visits available to students, many of which are well attended. However, the school has not evaluated the impact of this provision on different groups, including those who travel to and from school by bus, and hence is not fully aware of how well it meets the needs of all students. All other areas of equality of opportunity are effectively monitored by the

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school which has ensured that all students achieve well. Members of the governing body work well with senior leaders to set the direction of the school and to hold it to account. They have worked effectively to ensure limited funding is used as effectively as possible and that the school provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend opportunities for students to gain a better understanding of life in multicultural Britain and the world.
- Increase the breadth of the curriculum by:
 - implementing the proposed changes in Key Stage 4 to offer students a wider range of examination courses, including ICT and religious education
 - identifying how effectively extra-curricular opportunities meet the needs of different groups of students, including those who have to travel to and from school by bus.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4, including the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C with both English and mathematics, are above average. The school beat its targets for the proportion of students gaining three or more A* or A grades and its challenging targets in the specialist areas. Over a third of the students took separate sciences in 2009 and results were well above average. Progress is good and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very good support to make similar progress to their peers. During the inspection, students were observed making good and often outstanding progress in lessons. Behaviour is good because students are engaged and enthusiastic in lessons and want to achieve. Any misdemeanours are quickly and effectively dealt with, although a few responses from questionnaires showed that at sometimes behaviour can be more problematic. The school's tracking shows that the vast majority of students are likely to achieve in line with or above their challenging target grades this summer.

Students feel safe and enjoy coming to school. The respect shown for each other is a strong feature and also demonstrates excellent social skills. Many students take activities to help them keep fit and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, although at times some do not take enough responsibility for their own health, including those few who smoke. The school supports students well with their health, including good relationships with Confidential Help and Advice for Teens (CHAT). Students report that the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with immediately and effectively, and the school's system to track such incidents is very thorough.

Students develop an excellent understanding of moral issues through their work in different subjects. They have high expectations of themselves and of others, and demonstrate their mutual respect and trust by developing very good inter-personal and social skills. A strong spiritual element is prevalent in lessons so that a fascination with

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ideas and discussion is a regular feature which gives students a sense of awe and wonder. Students report that many staff give them opportunities to explore philosophical ideas and moral dilemmas as well as consider the impact of other cultures, such as African culture in art, Islamic medicine in history, and through visits to faith centres. Music has become more accessible with many students taking extra music tuition and taking part in a variety of ensembles at lunchtime and for performances. High attendance, along with good literacy and numeracy skills and improving ICT skills, ensures that students are well prepared 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	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	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	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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Students make good progress through a combination of some good and often outstanding teaching, a curriculum which meets their needs and outstanding care, guidance and support. There are many strengths in the teaching. Staff know their students well and have good subject knowledge using a variety of different, and often imaginative, activities to engage students. The consistent planning for lessons ensures that students progress at pace and are fully engaged, although at times learning

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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objectives lack precision and work is not always varied to meet the needs of differing abilities. Well-focused questioning is used well in some lessons to extend students' learning although this is not consistent across all subjects.

The curriculum meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students and it successfully concentrates on them doing well on a narrower range of subjects in Key Stage 4 than is usually seen. It also includes suitable vocational courses and subjects like psychology which students study after school. In order to give a greater variety, the school has well developed plans to change the curriculum in both key stages from September 2010. These plans include more time for art, music and drama in Key Stage 3 and introducing a course to help students develop learning skills in Year 7. It also extends the options available, including planning for diploma courses, for example in environment and land based studies to meet local needs. The specialist area also works well to support elements of the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors and well-received enrichment days.

The excellent pastoral care ensures that students are very well supported. Personal social and health education (PSHE) is very strong within the school and students were observed taking a very responsible attitude when discussing the problems with alcohol. However, students did not recognise that this was also a way in which the school helped them remain healthy. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who are looked after are very well supported and their needs are well met, often including very good working with a variety of external agencies. Students say that they are very well informed and supported prior to arriving at the school, when they make choices at the end of Year 9 and before going on to further education or the world of work at 16.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The highly effective headteacher and senior leaders give a very strong steer and direction. They have set clear expectations and lead by example. Staff share their vision and ambition and are highly motivated in continuing the improvements within the school. All members of staff who submitted their questionnaire said they were proud to be a member of the school and that it was well led. This is testament to how effective

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the leadership has been in motivating and supporting staff. The school has been very successful in improving the quality of teaching, and has utilised effective support through both its specialist areas and the teaching and learning group. Highly effective departmental reviews involve middle leaders in evaluating their work and include inputs from students. The school has good arrangements with other local schools and external agencies and parents are regularly asked for their views on proposed changes, for example the changes to the school day.

Students and parents are also able to influence the work of the governing body who are supportive of the school through their well defined and effective committees.

Safeguarding procedures are good and taken very seriously by all staff. The school gives good support to the local community and works well with its partners.

The inclusive nature of the school, together with a comprehensive analysis of examination data to identify any underachievement of individuals or groups, has enabled the school to ensure equality of opportunity with achievement, although it does not analyse extra-curricular areas to a similar degree.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	3
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

Responses from parents were extremely positive, with the very large majority saying that their child enjoyed school. While some areas are not as positive for all questions, the very large majority of responses showed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Parents also commented how well the school had supported their child. One comment reflecting others said: 'I am always impressed by the dedication of the staff

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and the amount of work that they do.'

Poor behaviour in a few classes was raised as an issue by an extremely small proportion of parents along with a lack of communication. The inspection team found behaviour to be good, although they were aware from students that there are very rare incidents of weaker behaviour. The team were also able to see some very clear communication between school and home but were aware that some students did not always take responsibility of delivering letters to parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Mary Webb School and Science College 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 250 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 570 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	27	167	67	10	4	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	93	37	148	59	5	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	30	151	60	21	8	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	32	152	61	15	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	63	25	166	66	15	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	22	160	64	26	10	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	12	170	68	40	16	1	0
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)	54	22	169	68	9	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	22	172	69	18	7	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	20	157	63	22	9	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	18	159	64	21	8	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	79	32	157	63	7	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	91	36	142	57	12	5	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



11 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Mary Webb School and Science College, Pontesbury, Shrewsbury, SY5 0TG

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 your good behaviour and manners and how well you contribute to the life of the school and local community. You told us that you really enjoy school and this is one reason, of many, that we judge your school to be improving and good.

You make good progress. Results in your GCSE examinations are above average. We observed a high proportion of your teachers and judged that teaching is good overall with many outstanding lessons. We are aware that your school is in the process of changing the curriculum to give a greater breadth and we have seen that when this is in place it will be an improvement. We have also asked the school to check that all of you who want to can take part in extra-curricular activities, especially those of you who have to travel to and from school by bus. We also noted that some of you thought the school could do more to help you remain healthy. The school does a lot and it is not just the way in which the canteen supplies food but also the very good work that is done within PSHE. You can help yourselves by taking more responsibility for your actions, eating the healthy options and for a few of you, not smoking. There are excellent relationships with staff, lessons are challenging and interesting with a rich variety of activities.

Staff care for you excellently, making sure you are able to go forward to the next stage of your education at the end of Year 11 as well as helping you to settle at the start of Year 7. You have a good understanding of your local area but we have asked your school to improve your understanding of different parts of Britain and the world. Your headteacher and other senior leaders have very clearly identified what needs to be done and they are very determined to carry on improving the school. They are supported by some excellent subject and pastoral leaders and teachers.

We wish you well at this good school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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