

John Masefield High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116955
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	358062
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Barbour 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	907
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Spencer Lane
Headteacher	Andrew Evans
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2008
School address	Mabel's Furlong Ledbury HR8 2HF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Thirty-nine lessons were observed, taught by 39 teachers. Meetings were held with students, staff, governors and a group of partners. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, 280 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well teachers are identifying and motivating students at risk of achieving less well than they should.
- The quality of care, guidance and support offered by the school
- The factors affecting the past and current outcomes in the sixth form.
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well it matches the needs of all groups of students.

Information about the school

John Masefield High School is a comprehensive school of a similar size to other comprehensive schools. Over 90% of students are of White British background. There is a lower than average proportion of students from minority heritage backgrounds and a higher than average proportion from Romany Traveller communities. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has specialist status in performing arts. It holds the Artsmark Gold award, Training School status, Healthy School status, Eco Schools Green Flag award and the International School Intermediate Award.

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

John Masefield High School is a good school that is improving. Students enjoy their lessons and their attendance is now high and improving. The school has a number of very successful aspects. The school's excellent care, guidance and support help students to develop confidence and maturity. Teachers identify quickly if students are at risk of achieving less well than they should and provide good-quality support. One parent said: 'Both my children went to small primary schools. I was both surprised and delighted at how personal John Masefield High School is despite its size. The children are treated as individuals.'

The very high-quality curriculum provides a wide range of subject choices in Years 10 and 11, and innovative opportunities in Key Stage 3, driven by the performing arts specialism. Students take good advantage of the broad range of extra-curricular activities available, and many of these relate to performing arts. Each week there are over 40 different activities available at lunch times and after school.

Teachers enable students to help shape many aspects of the school, for example what books are studied in English. Many students also take responsibility for organising sporting activities with local primary school pupils, and participate in local arts events and 'Ledbury in Bloom'. Their contribution to the school and the wider community is outstanding. These experiences, combined with their high attendance and good interpersonal skills, also mean that students are exceptionally well prepared for the world of work. The school's excellent engagement with parents and carers means that they also have been able to influence aspects of the school. Parents and carers find the mentor days valuable for them to find out in detail how their children are progressing. Students and their parents and carers believe that the school is a very safe environment indeed.

Leaders and managers are highly effective in securing the enthusiasm of the whole staff. The headteacher has a clear vision of high-quality provision. He has established a culture where inadequate teaching is not acceptable, and where every teacher is enabled to improve through effective professional development. As a result, teaching is good overall. The best teaching is marked by enthusiasm for the subject and the use of interesting tasks matched carefully to the prior attainment and talent of each student. Where teaching is satisfactory, the approach is more mundane with all students attempting the same work and when students do not know in detail how to improve their work.

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Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Two years ago, however, the school did not adapt its sixth form curriculum quickly enough to a changing student profile. Although the necessary action is now being taken, the effectiveness of the sixth form declined to good. Nevertheless, during the same period, other provision and students' outcomes have improved from good to outstanding, and therefore the school's overall capacity for further sustained improvement remains good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the best teaching and learning practice already evident in the school to ensure that all students consistently:
 - experience opportunities to work independently on challenging and creative tasks that match their abilities
 - understand in detail how to improve their work and then apply that knowledge to make excellent progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with attainment that is slightly above average. Examination results in 2010 were above average overall, although measures of progress were not significantly higher than expected. Analysis of the current performance of students currently in the school shows that their academic progress is good, and this is confirmed by the good learning that students make in lessons. Modern foreign languages and humanities are popular with students and they gain above average results in these subjects as well as in English. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making good progress. Some students of Romany Traveller heritage are achieving five good GCSEs as a result of the effective partnerships built up by the school with them and their families.

Students enjoy their learning and their good behaviour contributes to their high-quality learning. For example, in a lesson on urban renewal, they confidently discussed different approaches, both in groups and as a whole class. They evaluated other students' ideas maturely. Learning was less effective when students were given tasks that involved merely following instructions or developing techniques without a real understanding of the ideas underlying them. Students know how well they are doing and know their target grades, but do not always know precisely what they need to do to hit those grades.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students demonstrate tolerance and respect for each other. They can explain the impact that the school's international links have made on them. They can discuss ethics and the perspectives of different religions. However, they have little direct experience of diverse multicultural communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Students' enjoyment of school and the high quality of pastoral support have led to high attendance. Since students moved to their new classes last September, every year

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group has either maintained or further improved their already above-average attendance. The high-quality pastoral support has also resulted in students feeling very safe. They have confidence that any concerns will be taken seriously and followed up effectively. Large numbers of students take part in activities in the community and in leading sports events with primary schools. The responsibility that they exercise means that they make an outstanding contribution to the wider community, and develop excellent skills to prepare for future employment.

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	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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. The best teaching is characterised by teachers who have a passion for their subject, and who prepare engaging and creative activities. Teachers give careful explanations, but also make sure that there is a rich dialogue with students able to discuss their ideas in small groups or in the whole class. In a Year 11 dance lesson, the teacher challenged students with high expectations and a challenging level of technical demands. Students had to assess each other and the teacher gave high-quality feedback also. Where the teaching is satisfactory, it is often because the teacher talks to the class for too long, or that the activities provided are routine and not matched to students' abilities. Students with special educational needs receive effective specific support, for example with writing skills.

The outstanding curriculum is underpinned by the school's specialist status. All Year 9 students take part in a formal Arts Council qualification, with high success rates. They can recall enthusiastically their enjoyment of this project, alongside many other

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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memorable experiences through both the formally taught curriculum and the extra-curricular programme. The school is meeting its specialist college targets.

The outstanding care, guidance and support make a major contribution to students' achievement. Any incidents of bullying are logged carefully and dealt with effectively. Some students enter the school after Year 7, having experienced a lack of success in other schools. These students speak powerfully of the support they have received from staff at the school. School leaders have good links with the Romany Traveller community, and these students are well supported.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have established an ethos in the school as a caring community with high expectations. School self-evaluation is robust and leads to challenging but realistic development planning based on priorities of high-quality learning, teaching and pastoral care. Teaching and learning have improved due to a specific drive to embed the school's considered approach to effective learning and high-quality teaching. This drive has been accompanied by enhanced monitoring of lessons by school leaders. Teachers are given a clear idea of their performance and areas for improvement. This is accompanied by a programme of professional development tailored to the individual needs of each teacher.

Leaders and managers promote equality and tackle discrimination well. Data are carefully analysed, and when, for example, it became clear that students with English as an additional language were under-represented in extra-curricular activities, action was taken to address this. The pastoral support for students of Romany Traveller heritage makes a material impact also on community cohesion.

Procedures for safeguarding students' well-being are good, and vulnerable students are supported well. The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and is effective in holding senior school leaders to account. Their strong ambitions for the school over the longer term are reflected in day-to-day action to ensure that the school is successful, financially secure and has buildings that are well-maintained and in a suitable condition.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	1
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 achievement of students in the sixth form over the past two years has been in line with that expected nationally but this represents a decline since the last inspection. Leaders and managers took concerted action in September 2010 to address this by improving the quality of the curriculum and ensuring high-quality teaching. Careful analysis of assessment data of students currently in the sixth form, confirmed by lesson observations, shows that progress for these students is now good. The students themselves feel well supported in making choices when they enter the sixth form, and are well prepared for higher education. One student commented: ‘For our teachers, nothing is too much trouble.’ Students’ progress is monitored regularly. Students in the sixth form play an active part in an inter-generational project in the community, and in academic support for students in the lower school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A larger than average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Almost all see the school as a safe environment, and the large majority agreed or strongly agreed with the other questions. There were a number of

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written comments, with a mixture of positive and negative comments. Some of the negative comments were about the management of students' behaviour. A few parents and carers, however, commented on how well the school had managed incidents of bullying. Inspectors found the behaviour of students to be good during the inspection and that procedures for handling such incidents were fair and robust. Students told inspectors that the school dealt well with such instances, once it knew of them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Masefield 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 280 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 907 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	100	36	166	59	13	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	117	42	156	56	6	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	141	50	129	46	10	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	118	42	148	53	10	4	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	84	30	188	67	4	1	4	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	81	29	183	65	13	5	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	22	189	68	24	9	5	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)	111	40	144	51	6	2	17	6
The school meets my child’s particular needs	83	30	180	64	10	4	7	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	23	171	61	33	12	11	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	73	26	168	60	16	6	18	6
The school is led and managed effectively	127	45	145	52	3	1	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	132	47	144	51	3	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 all 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	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of John Masefield High School, Ledbury, HR8 2HF

Thank you for your welcome and help when we came to your school and thank you to those we spoke to during the inspection. I am writing to tell you about our main findings.

John Masefield High School is a good school. Your teachers look after you very well, and the experiences you have in your lessons and in school clubs and trips are very well designed to provide you with a stimulating and interesting curriculum. As you move through the school you take on increasing responsibility, and also take an active part in the local community. You are being exceptionally well prepared for your future careers. In the questionnaire you told us clearly that you feel safe in school and adults in school care about you, that you learn a lot in lessons, and that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job. We agree with you in all of this. We were also pleased to see how much your attendance at school has improved. It is important that this improvement is maintained.

In our report we have asked the school to make sure that all the teaching you receive is good. We want you to experience creative and interesting lessons that are matched to your talents, and for you to know exactly what you need to do to improve your work. You can help by continuing to work hard and join in activities with enthusiasm, and in responding positively to advice on how to improve your work.

With best wishes for your future success

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector

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