



Madeley Court School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123581
LEA Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number 281513
Inspection dates 17 May 2006 to 17 May 2006
Reporting inspector Graham Sims AI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Court Street
School category	Community		Madeley
Age range of pupils	10 to 16		Telford, Shropshire TF7 5DZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01952 680306
Number on roll	579	Fax number	01952 582012
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Pauline Hughes
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Vic Maher

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
10 to 16	17 May 2006 - 17 May 2006	281513

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Madeley Court School faces challenging circumstances. It serves an area in the south of Telford where there is significant economic and social deprivation. The proportions of students who are eligible for free school meals, who have learning difficulties and disabilities, who have statements of special educational need and who leave or join the school during the school year are all well above average. The great majority of students come from a White British background. The school is smaller than most secondary schools. After a period without a permanent headteacher, a new headteacher was appointed in June 2003. Since September 2003, the school has been federated with Thomas Telford School. In September 2004, it achieved specialist sports college status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

What a difference the last three years have made at Madeley Court School. After the arrival of a new headteacher and federation with Thomas Telford School, one student wrote: 'Things looked hopeful for the school ... we were back on track ... bullying was at a minimum ... Exam results are now at an all time high, and students cooperate with the teachers, who make their lessons fun and interesting'. During the two days of the inspection, discussions with staff, students, parents, governors and others working in partnership with the school all revealed a similar and strikingly consistent picture. This school, which three years ago was of significant concern to both the government and the local authority, is becoming increasingly effective and now offers its students a good standard of education. Key to this transformation has been the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and his senior leadership team. Equally important have been courageous decisions taken by the school's governors, the unstinting support of the headteacher and staff at Thomas Telford School, and improvements arising as a result of acquiring specialist sports college status. The financial investment has been significant, but it has been good value for the money. The school is still far from perfect, but the leaders have a very realistic picture of the school, even though they are modest in some of their judgements about its performance. They know what they need to do to improve. Standards are still below average, but students of all abilities are making good progress, and the proportion of students gaining five good passes at GCSE has risen dramatically. The school has battled hard to improve literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, but there is still some way to go to make students as literate as they should be. Many students are still very dependent on their teachers and lack confidence in their own ability. However, huge improvements in the quality of teaching, a much more appropriate curriculum and high quality care, support and guidance are all helping to fuel the transformation. The school is not stopping here - it is aiming higher and has the capacity to do even better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a coherent and consistent approach to improving students' literacy skills through the teaching of all subjects, as well as English, in order to raise standards in English.
- Develop students' self-confidence and their ability to use their initiative, be enterprising and learn independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students of all abilities are now achieving well throughout the school. Standards on entry to the school vary widely. In some years they are well below average; in others they are below average, but nearly all year groups contain a significant minority of students who enter with very low standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science, but students are making good progress.

Results in the national tests in 2005 were the best for the last five years and marked a significant improvement over those of the previous year. The greatest improvements have come in Years 10 and 11, where the progress of many students last year was outstanding. The percentage of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent rose from 22% in 2004 to 55% in 2005, only marginally short of the national average. The proportion achieving five such passes including English and mathematics, however, is still significantly below average, English being the main weakness. The school exceeded its ambitious targets in 2005, has set them higher for this year and already looks as if it will surpass them. Performance in some subjects is outstanding. A very large group of students in the current Year 11 looks set to achieve well above average results in art and design, and information and communication technology, the latter studied as a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). Standards in physical education have improved significantly as a result of the partnership with Thomas Telford School and the school's acquisition of specialist sports college status. Performance in other GCSE subjects, which draw heavily on students' literacy skills, is generally below average. However, across the board in 2005 the student body achieved significantly better results than those predicted by past performance and circumstances, and looks set to do even better this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The last three years have seen significant improvements in terms of students' personal development and well-being to the extent that these aspects and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are now satisfactory. Students now enjoy coming to school and greatly appreciate what is being done to improve life at school. Although there is still some poor behaviour, the standard has improved significantly. The great majority of students now have a positive attitude to their work and behave in a responsible manner in lessons and around the campus. Where lessons are stimulating and really capture the students' interest, their behaviour is often very good. Following joint efforts between the school and external agencies, like the local football club, attendance has improved considerably, although it is still below the national average. Students feel safe in school because procedures and the level of adult supervision are effective. Those at risk of exclusion are well supported and, as a result, the number of fixed and permanent exclusions is falling. Students and their parents are pleased with the speedy response the school makes to any incidents of bullying, the number of which has reduced significantly. Students are starting to respond to the Health Promoting Schools initiative and participate in more physical activities than before. An increasing number of students take advantage of the many and varied opportunities to contribute to activities in the community, especially when they are associated with their special interests, like gardening and countryside pursuits. Students feel that they are listened to when expressing views about the school. Most students enjoy their work experience and feel that they are well prepared and debriefed. Careers guidance is well regarded. Significant improvements in the school's provision for mathematics and ICT are helping students to develop basic skills that will enable them to enter into working life with confidence, although the low level of literacy skills is still a cause for

concern. Despite the school's efforts, many students still rely too heavily on their teachers for guidance and lack the self-confidence to work independently or to use their own initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The guidance provided by the school's senior teachers and the support given by advisers from the local authority and teachers from Thomas Telford School have helped to all but eradicate unsatisfactory teaching and have improved the overall quality of teaching and learning so that they are now good. Some of the teaching is outstanding. The senior leadership team has accurately identified areas where teaching still needs to be improved, such as becoming more effective in the development of students' literacy skills. Assessment information is used well to match tasks to students' abilities. Long lessons are structured well to include a variety of achievable challenges. Teachers are making good use of ICT to enrich the experience offered to students. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to support students with learning difficulties. Key factors in improving standards have been the way specific support has been given to small groups of students and the teachers' determination to help students to succeed. Many students, however, are very dependent on this support and have yet to develop good independent learning skills. Extensive investment in new equipment and the involvement of all students in pursuing a vocational qualification in ICT are helping to improve such skills, but there is still a long way to go.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Adaptation of the curriculum to provide a more vocational bias and developments initiated after acquiring sports college status have improved the quality of the curriculum which is now good and provides well for all students. An effective learning support centre meets the needs of students with learning difficulties well. Provision for ICT has improved hugely, and an online curriculum is being developed. Successful involvement of the business community, for example, in developing interview and presentation skills through work experience, contributes well to aspects of English, although there is insufficient cross-curricular development of writing skills. Students now start their option subjects in Year 9 and students in Years 10 and 11 now study for a broader range of qualifications at appropriate levels. These changes have resulted in more positive attitudes and better achievement. A rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education, enriches the curriculum for students of all ages, interests and abilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overall quality of care, guidance and support throughout the school is good, and some aspects are outstanding. The school is very thorough in checking students' progress and provides good guidance and support. As a result, all students and their parents have a clear understanding of current attainment, recent progress and what needs to be done to reach challenging individual targets. Provision for personal, social and health education is now incorporated well into appropriate areas of the curriculum, although tutorial time at the start of the school day is not always used as effectively as it could be. The school has developed excellent links with colleges and businesses to ensure that students receive good advice and guidance to make informed and appropriate career or further education choices. The quality of personal care is outstanding. Much time and energy is committed to ensuring the students' safety and developing positive attitudes to health. A large team of adults from within the school works very well in partnership with external specialists to provide a very wide range of initiatives designed to safeguard the welfare and well-being of all students, but especially the more vulnerable. This has been important in helping create a learning environment in which students feel secure and are able to focus on achieving higher standards. Students with learning difficulties are particularly well supported by a skilled and dedicated team.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The enormous improvements that have taken place over the last few years would not have happened without the outstanding leadership and management provided by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. The writer quoted at the start of this report is very clear about the impact of the new headteacher and the effect of key qualities of authority, care and compassion. 'He introduced new rules and did not take kindly to rule breakers. He reminded us who was in charge and we soon got the message ... , he listens to our problems and helps to sort them quickly and effectively. This spreads confidence across the school, making it a better environment to work in.' Governors have made courageous decisions, taken swift action and have provided full support for the new regime, as well as being critical when needed. The impetus for improvement and the pace of change have been relentless, and it has not all been plain sailing. It started with an unequivocal desire to improve the physical environment of the school, to eradicate poor teaching and to drive up standards - and these areas have been tackled very effectively. The school's comprehensive, honest and penetrating appraisal of its own performance ensures that no stone is left unturned. A major survey of parents' and students' views has been undertaken, and the analysis has contributed to decisions on future developments. Some areas for improvement are put aside for a later day, but all staff are fully aware of the current priorities, and unstinting support is provided by the senior leadership team to achieve these. The three year federation with Thomas Telford School, which finishes at the end of this school year, has been crucial in bringing improvement. Excellent support has been provided at many levels:

mentoring for the headteacher; professional development for staff, particularly in physical education and ICT; provision of new resources; funding of new initiatives; and the opportunity for small groups of students to visit regularly, experience a new environment and receive expert teaching. Acquisition of specialist sports college status in record time has also been a significant factor in improving not only the provision for physical education, but in raising morale, improving resources and the quality of the teaching. This has been a great success story, and there is definitely capacity for more!

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Students My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed visiting your school on 17 and 18 May. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking to us. What struck us most were the comments of staff, parents, governors and yourselves on how much the school has improved over the last three years. The following are our main findings:

- You are all making much better progress now in your work, and the improvement in the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE passes from 22% in 2004 to 55% in 2005 was truly remarkable.
- The standards you achieve in some subjects, such as art and ICT, are very good, but many of you still need to develop much better skills in English.
- You have much more positive attitudes to school now, behaviour and attendance have improved and bullying has decreased. With your help, it would be good to secure even more improvement in these areas.
- There has been a big improvement in the quality of teaching which is now good. We note that your behaviour and motivation are at their best in interesting and stimulating lessons – the school is working hard to make all lessons like these.
- The provision of vocational courses, opportunities provided as a result of gaining specialist sports college status and the support provided by Thomas Telford School, particularly in ICT, have brought big improvements to the curriculum.
- Staff provide a high standard of care, support and guidance. Too many of you, however, still rely too heavily on your teachers and need to develop greater confidence in your own abilities and to become more independent learners.
- The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and his senior staff, and the support of governors and partners at Thomas Telford School, have been outstanding and have been key factors in transforming the school. We hope that you will continue to support the staff to make your school even better.

Yours sincerely,
Mr Graham Sims Lead Inspector