

The Meden School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122845
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	292528
Inspection dates	14 - 15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Pam Haezwindt HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of students	11 - 18
Gender of students	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1308
6 th form	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Munnings
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Reid
Date of previous school inspection	10 - 14 March 2003
School address	Burns Lane Warsop Nottinghamshire NG20 0QN
Telephone number	01623 843517
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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

The Meden School and Technology College is a large school, which serves the community of Warsop and surrounding areas of north Nottinghamshire. The sixth form of 151 students is medium-sized. The number of students eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Only very few students do not speak English as their first language. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although fewer students than nationally achieve higher levels of attainment and there is a significant number of students with below average reading ages on entry. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Meden School has been a specialist technology college since 2001. The school was re-accredited with Investors in People in 2006. A new build is expected in 2012.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. The large majority of parents and carers express their satisfaction with the school. One parent wrote of her daughter: 'She is always enthusiastic about her classes and happy to attend'. Parents feel any concerns will be 'dealt with promptly to their satisfaction' and that, should they need to, they can contact the school about any issue. The school increasingly uses its comprehensive website to communicate with parents and the community.

Overall, standards and achievement are satisfactory after a period of decline following substantial staff turbulence. Recently, the newly formed senior leadership and management team has successfully arrested this decline with improved progress this year. There is good capacity to improve. Staff encourage the aspirations of sixth formers well. More are now aiming to progress on to further and higher education and have high expectations of themselves. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The school's technology college status has contributed well to improvement. Its targets are largely met and its specialist subjects are making a significant contribution to overall examination successes. Targets for 2007 were exceeded in all three specialisms: mathematics, science and technology. Senior leaders intend to raise targets for 2008 to create more challenge in the light of this success.

Students' personal and social development is satisfactory with a number of strengths. Students behave well and told inspectors that they enjoy their education and feel safe. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Students make a good, positive contribution to the school and wider community through the School Council, various committees, sports' leadership roles and charity fundraising. Their moral and social development is good. Cultural development is slightly less so because their knowledge of multicultural Britain is not sufficiently developed. Spiritual development is satisfactory because opportunities for it are not sharply identified across the curriculum and other aspects of school life. Students know how to develop healthy life styles and many are doing so. They develop some workplace skills through work placements and alternative curriculum provision, but overall this is not yet a strength of the school, and some students' lack of basic skills, such as literacy, prevents them from developing as well as they might.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory largely because marking and day to day assessment are not always good enough to ensure that all students make the very best progress they can. Where some students submit written assignments by email, the latter is being used well by staff to provide feedback. Not all learning is as engaging or challenging as it might be and the curriculum is sometimes too knowledge driven at the expense of students' learning relevant skills to help them in their future lives. There are many strengths in the way the school cares for its students but its overall guidance to improve individual student achievement is satisfactory. There are good links and partnerships with other providers and agencies to support students' well-being.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. It is good at senior leadership level but some middle leaders are not yet sufficiently strategic in their thinking and

have yet to assume fully their responsibilities for student improvement. There is, however, an improving picture. Senior leadership has accurately evaluated provision and outcomes, and successfully drawn up a set of priorities for improvement. Some of these have yet to be firmly implemented. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection including that related to the key areas for improvement and the impact of technology college status.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Inspectors agree with the school that standards in examinations in the sixth form are below national averages, and progress has been slower than expected overall. This is because, with an open and inclusive sixth form, the attainment of students on entry to Year 12 is falling. Some students have found the greater academic rigour of the sixth form difficult. This resulted in lower standards in some AS level examinations in 2007. Nevertheless, progress is broadly satisfactory overall. Owing to successful consortium arrangements, the range and suitability of subjects and courses is now starting to improve. Students' personal development is good, and many already demonstrate good, young adult attitudes, which they acknowledge are boosted by the approachability of the staff. While the quality of teaching is mixed, much good practice exists. Improved systems for monitoring, tracking and mentoring students are being put into practice this year. The school accepts the need for improved assessment and targeting, and is in the process of taking satisfactory steps to secure this. Capacity to improve sixth form provision is now good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put into practice immediately the priorities identified by leaders to raise standards and achievement.
- Sharpen the use of assessment and marking throughout the school to ensure students know exactly what to do to improve both short and long term.
- Ensure that all teaching and learning is interesting and challenging and students develop skills relevant to their future needs.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Since the previous inspection the school has undergone a significant period of staff turbulence which has impacted negatively on students' achievement. In English, for example, a three-

year decline in standards occurred in Key Stage 3. This has now been halted, but was largely responsible for students' achievement being inadequate during Years 7 to 9. A significant contributory factor was that more experienced staff were teaching GCSE courses. A new headteacher, along with improved strategic thinking in the leadership team, has led to an important period of monitoring throughout the last academic year. Staff have now reversed the falling trend, and have successfully raised students' own expectations and aspirations. Progress is now satisfactory. Nevertheless, a raft of positive strategies, introduced this academic year, has yet to have a full impact. Standards were below average and achievement below expectations in the 2007 national tests for Year 9, but English improved well. Girls, however, underachieved in mathematics. The performance of potentially higher attaining students has been prioritised for improvement. GCSE results in 2007 were below the national average, and did not meet the school's overall targets. However, when the specific learning difficulties and personal circumstances of a significant minority of students are taken into account, results are closer to the national and local averages. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The great majority of students behave well, both in lessons and around school. Recent action to reduce incidents of bullying has been effective and exclusions are decreasing. Students feel safe. They are relaxed and courteous with visitors, and treat one another with consideration. They adopt a high moral stance and many express their opinions in a mature manner, as was observed both in School Council discussions and in a Year 9 science lesson on cloning. They show concern for others in their ready response to charitable fund-raising. Students themselves organise many social events, including outings and visits. As in the previous inspection, spiritual development is limited because opportunities to reflect and appreciate qualities in the world and others are not made sufficiently available through the main curriculum. Students are increasingly knowledgeable about cultural differences. However, they have too few opportunities for contact with people from different traditions in Britain to be better prepared for life in our culturally diverse society. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory.

Students are able to plan for their economic future as a result of work experience and work-related learning, and there is good contact with local colleges and universities. For a number of students, low literacy skills create barriers to future employment. Students are generally well informed about healthy life-styles, and many are regularly involved in various sports activities. Younger students spoke appreciatively of the choice of meals available in the school canteen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. This is similar to the school's evaluation. Marking and assessment are not always strong enough to ensure that students know precisely what to do to improve their work. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is improving, as was seen in lessons that were observed as these were often good. There are good working relationships so that little time is wasted by poor behaviour and the best lessons move at a fast pace, with students challenged well by lively activities and the effective use of resources, and made to think. Some lessons are too teacher dominated with little scope for pupils to learn independently. Marking and feedback are inconsistent across the school. While marking is mostly up to date and regular, it does not always provide formative comment to help the students take the next steps to improvement. Similarly, assessment for learning is still in its infancy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A satisfactory curriculum is improving well, owing to the continuing additional resources that technology college status brings. This has an impact not only in technology, mathematics and science, but in all subjects, through the wider use of ICT to enhance the curriculum. Statutory requirements are met, although staff are aware that in Key Stage 3 insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of skills. In the past two years, a more suitable range of academic and vocational GCSE courses has been introduced to meet students' needs and interests effectively. Plans to develop further alternative courses such as BTEC and other diplomas are in place for 2008.

Suitable provision for careers education and for work experience is evident. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including games and music, is provided. The take-up of these activities is said to be good, but the school does not keep a record of how many students are involved. Students say they would like more on the arts side. A good variety of school visits in the local community and further afield at home and abroad enhances what is taught further. However, the acceptance of non-participation in core physical education in Year 11, by a significant minority of students, limits the subject's impact on health and fitness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a safe and supportive environment for learning. Child protection requirements, health and safety and safeguarding procedures are good. The school actively promotes social inclusion and positively combats bullying. The school knows its students' circumstances well. Students' achievements are celebrated thoughtfully and regular parents' evenings, review days and option evenings are arranged. The school involves parents and carers of students with specific learning needs well in efforts to enhance students' learning. However, not enough academic guidance is given to individual students on improving their work and progress.

Support for those students identified with learning difficulties and for those who are in public care is effective and particularly well supported by the inclusion team. Learning support assistants help students effectively and monitor their progress. The Student Support Centre works effectively with students who have learning or attendance issues. Links with 'Mansfield Alternative To Exclusion' provide an alternative to excluding students. Students receive effective advice when choosing options and making careers choices. Transition arrangements for new students and those moving from primary education are strong. Students speak highly of the induction processes they went through, especially about the support of student mentors.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's clear vision focuses all staff strongly on raising students' achievement. The recently restructured senior leadership team provides good support. Staff and students alike are strongly behind the school's values, which are regularly discussed in staff and student meetings and assemblies. The views of parents, students and other stakeholders are sought and taken into account. Monitoring of teaching and learning is robust.

Senior leaders have focused well on the development of the middle leaders' roles as key to raising students' standards and achievement. Some strong headway is apparent in this respect. Although inconsistencies in the use of data from one department to another still remain, this aspect is much improved. As a result, far greater accountability through regular management meetings is now possible and evident.

The school's improvement since the previous inspection is good. There is suitable staffing, but many long-term absences over the past two years, including those of senior and middle leaders, have adversely affected students' learning and achievement. The capacity to withstand such situations, however, is now being tackled effectively with improved leadership and management strategies, teaching, and learning.

Governance is satisfactory. Resources are deployed well and very prudent management has balanced a substantial deficit budget. Value for money is satisfactory.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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	3	
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	

Annex B



19 November 2007

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Meden School and Technology College, Warsop,
NG20 0QN**

On behalf of the inspection team and myself, I should like to thank you for contributing to the inspection, especially for talking to us very maturely and showing us to various places in the school.

We were pleased to find that you enjoy school and think that the staff want the best for you. You behave well in lessons and around the school, and your attendance has improved since the previous inspection, which is good news. We find that your school provides a satisfactory standard of education and that there are a number of strengths.

You are all well-cared for and the staff strive to make the school a safe place in which to learn. There is variety in what you can study in Key Stage 4 and it is enhanced in the sixth form by the consortium arrangements. Staff believe the curriculum does not help you develop skills for your future as well as it might and we agree. There will be some changes made for next year. There are a good number of regular extra curricular activities, particularly for sport and music, but you would like a bigger range and again we agree with you. You have a good choice of visits and trips at home and abroad. Being a technology college has helped to improve results, the school's resources, and broaden the learning opportunities available to you.

Your headteacher and the schools' leaders are working hard to improve your achievements and test and examination results. They have several strategies for doing so and we have urged them to proceed with the most important immediately. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but sometimes you are not challenged enough, or expected to work sufficiently independently, or shown what the next steps are to help you to improve quickly. We have asked your teachers to make sure this happens. You can help by telling staff what helps you learn best.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezwindt HMI
Lead Inspector