

The Lancaster School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120283
Local authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	379989
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins 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 pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	928
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Greenwood MBE
Headteacher	Russell Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2009
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Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	1–2 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional inspector

Piers Ranger

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Bob Roberts

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. During the inspection, they observed 39 lessons taught by 39 teachers. They also made a number of shorter visits to 13 lessons to follow particularly lines of enquiry and evidence trails. Inspectors met with senior leaders, four groups of students, a representative from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and a selection of staff. They observed the school's work and looked at its improvement plan, data on students' progress, attendance, behaviour referrals and records of any incidents of bullying. Inspectors reviewed questionnaire responses from 86 parents and carers and 144 students.

Information about the school

The Lancaster School is an average-sized school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school's population is diverse, with approximately 55% of students from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being those of Indian heritage. Around a third speak English as an additional language and this proportion is rising. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average. A high proportion of pupils join and leave the school part-way through their secondary education. The school exceeds the current government floor standard measures for attainment. The school specialises in sport.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Most students make at least satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and, by the end of Year 11, their attainment is in line with national averages for most subjects, with the exception of mathematics and English which are below average. Achievement in these core subjects, however, is improving.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Leaders monitor the quality of lessons closely and, along with targeted teacher support and training, are ensuring greater consistency of approach in the planning of lessons. Teachers' feedback on students' work can sometimes be too vague to direct improvement.
- Behaviour has improved notably and is now satisfactory. Exclusions and incidents have fallen markedly, attendance and punctuality have improved and the number of recorded bullying incidents is low. In a small minority of lessons, behaviour is not managed effectively.
- Senior managers and the governing body set a clear direction for the school. The school's sports specialism remains a strength and, along with a broad curriculum, is developing effectively many aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Data is used much better to track students' progress but not all reporting is undertaken in sufficient depth or in an easy-to-interpret format to help managers and the governing body to measure fully the impact of their actions.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the summer term 2013, accelerate students' progress and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and English, to be at least in line with the national average by:
 - increasing the proportion of good or better lessons by ensuring teachers use a wider range of questioning techniques to deepen students' learning and

- check more frequently on what they have learnt
 - matching work carefully to students' abilities so that they are challenged at the right level and their active learning and participation is increased
 - take more opportunities to promote students' spiritual, social, cultural and moral awareness through lessons
 - provide students with clear and helpful guidance on how to improve their work.
- Improve behaviour further so that it is consistently good or better and a culture of good behaviour is established across the school by:
- developing teachers' skills and strategies to manage behaviour effectively in all lessons
 - consolidating more comprehensive systems to monitor students' behaviour.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management arrangements, and particularly the use of assessment, by:
- ensuring managers monitor and report more specifically and frequently on all differences in student performance, including those who join the school other than at the start of Year 7, so that any interventions can be swiftly arranged
 - reporting more clearly to the governing body on the performance of all different groups.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry to the school varies by cohort from broadly average to significantly below average. Attainment when compared nationally is low, although this is much less marked when compared against boys nationally. This has been mainly due to low attainment in English and mathematics. This being said, attainment is rising securely in these subjects, and for English, is rising faster than that nationally. Up to 2011, the improvement in mathematics has been slower than that nationally. The school altered its mathematics curriculum in the current academic year and this has greatly accelerated the progress students make. Performance in most other subjects is at least satisfactory. The school achieved its highest results in 2011 for students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics and for the overall proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C in any subject.

In lessons, inspectors observed students making satisfactory or better progress, including within English and mathematics. In many subjects, inspectors saw students given good opportunities to practise their writing and communication skills. As a result, students are developing their social interaction and presentation skills. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very positive about the progress their child had made since they started school and are pleased with the skills their child is developing.

Several groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, those students learning English as an additional language and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, are making progress at least in line with their peers. This is because they are monitored appropriately and supported well through targeted interventions. Most students of Indian heritage achieve well. Students who join the school other than at the start of Year 7 achieve less well.

Quality of teaching

Teachers display good subject knowledge and ensure through the curriculum that students receive a broad and balanced programme of learning. Inspectors observed good progress being made by students in over half of the lessons seen. In many lessons, teachers encouraged students to review their own progress, and the progress of their peers, enabling students to understand how well they have done and consider their next steps in learning.

Although almost all lessons observed were at least satisfactory, the progress of some students was hindered because teachers planned insufficiently for students' active participation or did not provide tasks that were sufficiently challenging for boys at different levels of ability. The range of questioning techniques used by teachers is sometimes too limited. Consequently, teachers do not check students' depth of understanding enough or assess how effectively different students are learning. In a few cases, learning is taken for granted because students complete a task. While spiritual, moral, cultural and social understanding is being identified routinely through teachers' lesson planning, opportunities are missed within lessons to highlight and reinforce this with students.

Inspectors observed some outstanding and good teaching. In these lessons, planning for students to work independently and take responsibility for their learning was strong. For example, in an English lesson, a serious, well-managed discussion about the issues facing asylum seekers was led and recorded by students through role play. This exercise provided effective opportunities for students to develop literacy skills and explore social and moral issues. In a rugby lesson, students collaborated very well, practising and developing skills independent of the teacher's immediate supervision. They responded appropriately to the referee, one of their peers, who was unable to take part in the game itself.

Students' coursework and homework is marked frequently by teachers. The vast majority of students are clear about their levels and targets. While some teachers provide detailed and specific feedback in student workbooks about how to improve further, other marking is too cursory.

Most parents, carers and students believe lessons are taught well although a minority air concerns about behaviour in some lessons. Inspectors endorse this view. In a small minority of lessons, behaviour is not managed effectively by teachers with the result that low-level disruption by a few students disrupts the learning of others in the class.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour, judged inadequate at the last inspection, is now satisfactory and is improving. Inspectors' discussions with students and observations within lessons, around the playground and in corridors confirmed that the school has continued to make good progress in improving behaviour. The school has increased interventions and carefully monitors students' behaviour and attendance. This has contributed to the number of fixed-term exclusions reducing by a half over the last three years. Students' overall attendance has also improved each year and is in line with the national average. Punctuality to lessons is mostly good. Staff work intensively with students who are persistently absent and, for several identified individuals, their persistent absence is reducing. The number of recorded bullying incidents, including any racist incidents, is low. In nearly all lessons, boys from a diverse range of backgrounds were seen interacting well together and demonstrating appropriate attitudes to learning.

Most students report feeling safe at school and state that any concerns, when reported, are handled swiftly by staff. The large majority of parents, carers and students are positive about behaviour at the school, although a significant minority feel that behaviour, particularly in some lessons, is disruptive. Inspectors endorse this view; they saw a few lessons where learning was disrupted by the behaviour of a small number of boys. This was due, predominantly, to students not being engaged or interested enough in the tasks they were set or teachers not being able to manage the behaviour effectively. Inspectors observed very good behaviour in physical education lessons. Initiatives such as the sports leaders and student ambassadors are proving popular and are effective in developing students' levels of responsibility and their social and communication skills.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers are clear about the school's priorities for further improvement. The school has increased levels of accountability for senior and middle leaders and data are used much better to track students' progress. Actions by managers are beginning to accelerate students' achievement in English and mathematics. With the support of the governing body, leaders have taken effective action to improve behaviour within the school since the previous inspection. As a result, learning is improving in many lessons and students' experience of school is more positive. This demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The school has a comprehensive system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Training and support for improving teachers' skills is good and is leading to greater consistency in approach to secure better progress for students. Findings from the joint observations undertaken between inspectors and senior leaders were closely aligned. The proportion of lessons that are good or better is increasing over time.

The school's curriculum meets the needs of students satisfactorily and has some positive features that are increasing students' interest and the progress they make.

For example, the school has improved its alternative provision with a focus on work-related learning to better engage and support the needs of students with emotional, social or behavioural problems. A reading and literacy programme in Year 7 is leading to many students accelerating their reading skills over their first year in school. The sports specialism remains a strength of the school, providing a range of physical activities which many boys enjoy and from which they benefit. The widespread promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory rather than better because it has not permeated all areas of the school's work. Students are prepared well for life after school and most students' progress into education, employment or training when they leave.

The promotion of equality and diversity by leaders and managers, including the governing body, is satisfactory. The school promotes its diverse community effectively and students from a very wide range of backgrounds and over 44 different languages interact well. The school monitors the performance of different groups and has been successful in reducing many gaps in achievement. The reporting of different groups at strategic level is not always in enough detail or in a sufficiently user-friendly format to readily identify all comparisons in performance. For example, the school does not routinely report on the performance of the group of students who enrol at times other than at the start of Year 7 and compare it to those who have a standard entry to the school to identify any differences in rates of progress. The school meets government requirements for safeguarding young people. The large majority of parents, carers and students who responded to the inspection questionnaires confirmed that the school provides a safe environment.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

2 February 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of The Lancaster School, Leicester, LE2 6FU

I would like to thank you all for welcoming me and my three colleagues to your school. We found it very helpful to talk to you in meetings and gain your views informally around the school at break and lunch times. We read the feedback from those of you who completed inspection questionnaires and we found all your feedback helpful in finding out about your school.

We found the overall effectiveness of your school to be satisfactory. You are achieving satisfactorily in most subjects. Your attainment in English and mathematics has been below average but is improving, particularly this year. You told us that behaviour has improved and this is helping you to learn much better in lessons, although in a few lessons behaviour by a small number of students leads to low level disruption. We also found this to be the case.

There are three areas where we have suggested further improvements.

- Raise your attainment and progress, particularly in mathematics and English, by increasing the proportion of lessons where tasks are matched to your abilities so that you are challenged effectively and giving you clear guidance on how to improve your work.
- Continue to improve behaviour so that it is consistently good or better in all lessons in order to further accelerate your learning and increase your enjoyment of school.
- Strengthen the way leaders and the governing body use the information about how well each of you are doing.

You can help the school improve further by behaving well in lessons and working hard in all your subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all well in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

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