

# Lonsdale School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117679
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379453
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 December 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Thompson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of social care was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	74
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Hanbury
<b>Headteacher</b>	Maria White
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Webb Rise Stevenage SG1 5QU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 357631
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<b>Email address</b>	head@lonsdale.herts.sch.uk

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<b>Residential provision</b>	
<b>Social care Unique Reference Number</b>	SC056425
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Wendy Anderson

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<b>Age group</b>	3–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	7–8 December 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	379453

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, an additional inspector and a social care inspector. They visited 15 lessons taught by 13 teachers and observed lunch-time arrangements. Inspectors also observed a secondary assembly and the primary phase Christmas assembly for parents and carers. Meetings were held with parents, carers, groups of students, representatives from the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school improvement plan and policies related to behaviour and equalities. They also analysed 25 questionnaires from parents and carers, 57 from students and 55 from staff.

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

- Inspectors assessed the progress students made taking account of the length of time they have attended the school and gave particular focus to the progress being made by students with relatively higher attainment.
- They examined the extent to which teachers give students sufficient thinking and processing time and how well teachers adapt the learning according to these responses.
- Inspectors evaluated how well the sixth form curriculum builds upon previous learning and how well the courses provided match the range of students' needs.
- They examined how effectively the school's self-evaluation assesses the impact of changes in provision on the outcomes for students.
- The inspection team assessed the effectiveness of the curriculum out of school hours in supporting students' personal and academic development.

## Information about the school

Lonsdale is a residential special school catering for students with physical and neurological impairments. Students attending the school come from the whole of Hertfordshire. Although the school is registered to provide Early Years Foundation Stage provision there was no provision for this age range at the time of this inspection nor was the provision used during the previous year. The school is moving to a new co-located site with Marriotts, a local secondary school. These two schools have established a partnership called a 'soft federation'. All students have statements of special educational needs and 56 are wheelchair users. Most students are from White British backgrounds. A few students are in the early stages of learning English and there are a small number of students who are looked after by the local authority. Approximately 14% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Lonsdale offers residential opportunities to all of the secondary aged students. Two groups of boarders stay each week, one group on Monday and Tuesday evenings and a second group on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. There are currently 47 students who stay in residence. The school is accredited with the following awards, Eco Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award, Young Enterprise Centre of Excellence and Active Mark.

**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

The school provides a good standard of education and students achieve well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The highly committed staff provide exceptional care and support across the school and residential provision. Students are treated with dignity and respect and their views and contributions to the school and their individual plans are excellent. The relationships throughout the school community are very positive and students feel extremely safe at school. The outcomes from the residential provision are excellent and students have exceptionally good opportunities to enhance their independent living and social skills. Students very much enjoy school and parents and carers are nearly all highly positive about the school.

Teaching is usually good enabling students to make good academic progress across the curriculum while some students make outstanding progress. Progress in verbal skills or using communication aids is very strong. Students usually make good progress in reading and writing but opportunities to refine and develop these skills across the curriculum and key stages are not fully maximised. Teachers usually have a good understanding of the levels at which students are working. The willingness of students to participate contributes to lessons running smoothly but at times some students are not challenged sufficiently and are given too few opportunities for independent study and investigation. The curriculum is good and focuses on developing key skills within a broader range of subjects. Some students are given good opportunities to gain accredited functional skill qualifications as soon as they are ready in the secondary phase. There is an exciting range of enrichment activities both during school and in the residential provision including sports and the arts helping students to achieve well. Although the curriculum is not yet refined enough to provide many options for sixth form students, recent changes have led to more age appropriate learning experiences. Evaluation of student progress and other outcomes of this curriculum have only just begun.

Partnership work is exceptional, demonstrated by the highly effective way in which the school promotes a truly multi-professional approach to provision for students both at school and in the residential provision. The senior leadership team and members of the governing body have successfully developed plans to co-locate the school with a local secondary school; building has begun and the involvement of students in the planning has been excellent. Their expectations and views about the move have been handled extremely well. Work with groups of students from both schools, particularly the performing arts projects, has also helped to lay very strong

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foundations for the new co-located schools. The senior team and members of the governing body have analysed the possible benefits of the move very well and are aware of the many opportunities this will afford the students. The senior team and members of the governing body know the strengths and areas for development in the school. Monitoring is regular and thorough but evaluation is not always challenging enough when considering the difference new initiatives and changes in provision have made to the progress and outcomes for different groups of students. The good progress made in improving teaching identified at the last inspection, the careful planning and management of change for the co-location and establishing outstanding residential provision demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Maximise time for learning and improve the use of ongoing assessment within lessons, including in the sixth form, by:
  - ensuring assessment leads to teachers adapting their questions and the levels of work expected so that all students are given a good level of challenge
  - ensuring students have more time for independent investigation and study.
- Improve consistency of the teaching of literacy across the whole school and ensure that all staff can develop and refine the skills students need for reading and writing.
- Increase the rigour of evaluation to ensure the senior team and governing body are aware of the precise impact any changes to provision have on the progress and outcomes for different groups of students.
- Make the necessary refinements to the way in which the National Minimum Standards are met.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

In most lessons, staff provide clear and high expectations, and students rise to the challenge and make good or better progress. This is especially so when they are given clear and structured feedback about their work and how they can improve. This was clearly demonstrated in an information and communication technology lesson where students were involved in considering their own levels of skill and technical understanding as well as working within a tight structure for evaluating each other's work. Progress in the use of information and communication technology to access the curriculum is good and often better. Some students make outstanding progress in English and mathematics but there is no consistent pattern with different groups of students. There are some exceptional examples where students' progress has rapidly increased once they have learnt how to use a suitable communication aid. Students who are looked after by the local authority are carefully monitored and

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make good or better progress as do the small number who are in the early stages of learning English. In some lessons progress is not as strong because expectations are not high enough or maintained throughout the lesson. For some students, progress fluctuates due to health needs and medical conditions but this is suitably tracked by the school.

Students behave well and are considerate towards one another. They are patient, supportive and have a very good understanding of each other's needs. This is replicated in the school day and in the residential provision. Students who find meeting the schools expectations for behaviour difficult are well supported and are making good progress in their ability to meet these expectations. Students have an excellent knowledge of their own disabilities and make excellent choices about involvement in a range of activities that help them to be healthy. Students relish opportunities for developing independent living skills and this is fully supported by the residential provision. They make good progress in developing skills required for their futures including work and enterprise skills. Students excel in their contribution to the school particularly through the school council and 'Green Beans eco group'. Students develop self-confidence and learn to advocate for themselves and each other. They are extremely proud of their school and enjoy attending. They have given opinions on a range of topics that have resulted in helping the provision to improve. Students become confident young people who will challenge perceived unfairness. They are great ambassadors of the school's inclusive ethos and demonstrate a strong awareness of spirituality.

*These are the grades for students' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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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## How effective is the provision?

Relationships in lessons between staff and students are excellent, and most of the time teaching enables students to make at least good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a good awareness of the levels that students are working at. They usually use this information to plan lessons well although occasionally the planning is too focused on the activity rather than what is to be learnt. Students learn the most when teachers are very focused on ensuring every part of the lesson counts. Support in these lessons is well planned and adapted for different parts of the lesson and stage of learning. The planned collaboration between students is a strong feature in many lessons. In most lessons there is effective ongoing assessment and teachers make sure there is a good level of challenge through questioning and raised expectations in response to the students’ levels of skills and understanding. In some lessons, not enough is expected from some students and time is not used effectively enough so that students spend too much time in larger groups or waiting for each other.

The curriculum across the primary and secondary phases is good. It is well designed to make links across subjects and promote the teaching of basic skills. However, the approach for teaching literacy across the key stages is not consistent. Physical education is well promoted throughout the school and through additional clubs. Theme days and weeks offer additional experiences particularly linked to students’ cultural development. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme is very well developed and meets the specific needs of students with disabilities.

The exceptional levels of care and support for students are especially appreciated by students and their parents and carers. The high quality support given both during the day and in the residential provision enables students to become more independent and learn how to organise and manage the personal care support that they require.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The inclusive ethos helps all students feel a great sense of belonging to the school and is promoted strongly by senior leaders. This makes a strong contribution to good community cohesion. Staff have a clear sense of direction and are keen to improve

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further. Effective monitoring has secured good improvements in the quality of teaching. The evaluation of students’ progress is being refined and more robust moderation systems have been implemented. The school promotes equal opportunities well. Senior leaders carefully analyse the participation of students in different school activities for residential and day students and action is taken if there is any inequality. They analyse the progress of individuals carefully and, now that assessment is more consistent, leaders are beginning to consider the progress made by different groups of students. The governing body works well with the school and has given considerable support for the co-location programme. Many of its members are frequent visitors to the school and take these opportunities to evaluate provision as well as explore the views of staff and students. The governing body and senior team consistently review policies in line with requirements but the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policies and school developments on the progress of students is less robust. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent across the school, including the residential provision. Recruitment procedures are very robust. Staff are extremely well trained in safeguarding and are diligent in acting upon and recording any concerns.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

The leader for the sixth form is new to the role this term and has already achieved much. The revised curriculum has been in place since the start of the term and other changes have helped to create a more age appropriate environment than was previously available. The arrangements give students adequate opportunities to act upon their own initiative. The students welcome more independent access to some of the facilities and enjoy the freedom they have during non-lesson times. The progress students make in this phase is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Supported by the



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residential provision, students make good gains in their social and independent personal skills. Students usually gain a college placement after being in the sixth form and tracking of their success at college has recently begun. Links with different local colleges are being re-established to ensure there are high enough expectations for future achievement. Teaching is satisfactory with some good opportunities for purposeful collaboration between students. Sometimes the language used by staff is too fast and too complex and there is insufficient time for students to undertake their own work. The curriculum is now suitably organised to prepare students for the next stage of their education. There is a satisfactory range of courses, including accredited ones, and discussions with students about their futures are helping to expand the type of courses on offer. There is a greater focus on establishing more individual pathways and offering more opportunities to ensure each student progresses to the next appropriate level of learning. More developments are planned to ensure the curriculum can support individual needs and ambitions more fully.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

**Overall effectiveness of the residential experience**

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. The quality of the provision has a positive impact on the development of the students’ social skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. The school is an inclusive environment which celebrates the individual and provides them with good opportunities for growth and development. The strength of the relationships between students and staff is at the heart of this and provides students with effective support in meeting their individual needs. Another key strength is the excellent level of consultation with, and involvement of, students in all aspects of their care and the day-to-day life at the school. Students feel that their ideas and views are valued, important and where possible acted upon. Although the views of families are sought annually there is not a specific section of the questionnaire dedicated to the residential aspect of the school.

The care for students is based on excellent individual care plans, which incorporate very detailed health care plans. Staff are very committed and proactive in ensuring students’ needs are met. They are supported by a dedicated team of nursing staff and therapists.

The residential accommodation is of a satisfactory standard, and staff have worked hard to ensure it provides students with a comfortable and relaxed environment in which to live. Students’ safety is protected with robust systems of risk assessments,

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recruitment and health and safety procedures. Students have access to an independent listener but currently they can only contact them via a member of staff. Staff are proactive at developing positive behavioural and social strategies for students which includes a residential achievement target developed with the young people.

There is a good training and development programme for staff that ensures they are kept informed of current practice and legislation. Staff report they feel well supported by both senior management and colleagues. Formal supervision only began in September 2011 but the recording of these does not fully reflect the discussions which take place. There are effective monitoring systems in place to safeguard students and these include regular visits from one of the members of the governing body. However the reports of these visits do not include information on the contact they have had with the students.

### National Minimum Standards

- Ensure young people are able to contact the independent visitor without redress to staff. NMS 2
- Ensure the record of staff supervision fully reflects the topics discussed. NMS 19.
- Ensure the governors’ report on the residencies includes records of their interaction with the young people. NMS 20
- Ensure the annual survey of young people and parents includes a specific section about the residential provision. NMS 17

*These are the grades for the residential provision*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the residential experience</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of residential provision and care	1
Residential pupils’ safety	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	2

### Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and feel that the care given to students is exemplary. Those that responded to the questionnaire are unanimous in their feelings that their child enjoys school and that the school keeps their child safe. The students also reported a great sense of being safe and the arrangements within the school for safeguarding are excellent. Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection were especially pleased with the way in which the school supported them in using communication aids at home and the progress students’ make using the aids is strong.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lonsdale 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 74 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	72	7	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	76	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	16	64	8	32	0	0	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	60	9	36	0	0	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	18	72	6	24	0	0	1	4
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	15	60	9	36	0	0	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	60	10	40	0	0	0	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)	14	56	9	36	0	0	1	4
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	64	9	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	60	9	36	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	60	9	36	0	0	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	20	80	4	16	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	20	80	4	16	1	4	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 students' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students.
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 students. 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Student referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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 student referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a student in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the students' 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 students 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of students.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' 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.**



9 December 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Lonsdale School, Stevenage, SG1 5QU**

It was a pleasure to meet you during the inspection and thank you for making me and my colleagues feel so welcome. Lonsdale School provides a good standard of education and the residential provision is outstanding. You all told us you enjoy attending school and I will explain what we found out about your school.

In your school work you make good progress and some of you make outstanding progress. This is because you usually work hard and help lessons run smoothly. You are extremely proud of your school and your understanding of other people's needs is excellent. This helps you to create a fun and supportive atmosphere where everyone feels safe and feel that they belong. You behave well throughout the school day and in the residential provision and are very supportive of each other. We would like you to demonstrate the same confidence you have in giving your views when you are learning and working things out in lessons. In lessons you work hard but at times we think the teachers could ask you to do more and give you time to think through your ideas and work things out for yourselves. We have also asked staff to make sure they teach reading and writing in a more consistent way so that you can achieve more.

Staff work hard and treat you well making sure your personal needs are met. The residential provision is outstanding and, as many of you told us, gives you excellent social opportunities when you can be with your friends. Your experiences in the residential provision help you to become very much more independent.

We have asked the leaders at your school to check that any changes lead to you all having better opportunities so that you can achieve even more. Those of you in the sixth form are treated in a more adult way and we have explored the good plans the school has to increase your choices and opportunities for courses. You can help these become real by working with staff to discuss your own ambitions.

There is an exciting time ahead as your school moves towards being co-located with Marriot School and I wish you all the best.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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