

The Lakes School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112379
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357094
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Sharples HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	642
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Stocker
Headteacher	Dr David Selby
Date of previous school inspection	10 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 31 lessons and 31 different teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including 94 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and 122 questionnaires completed by students.

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

- Students' progress especially in mathematics and for middle- and higher-ability boys, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The overall quality of teaching across a range of subjects, with a focus on the use of assessment to determine how well learners are attaining, learning and making progress.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form.
- The quality of leadership and management across the school, including the impact of middle leaders in bringing about improvement.
- The extent to which the curricular provision meets the needs of all students.

Information about the school

The Lakes School is a smaller-than-average secondary school and takes students from a wide surrounding area. A very large majority of students are from a White British background. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The school is strategically resourced for up to five students with physical and medical needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has specialist sports college status and is part of a South Lakes Federation between local schools, a college and university.

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 Lakes School provides a good standard of education and continues to improve. It is an inclusive school where every student matters and where the academic and personal development of all individuals is seen as equally important. The large majority of parents and carers were very positive about nearly all aspects of the school's life when responding to their questionnaire and most thought that the school met their child's particular needs.

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are above average. Over the last three years, attainment has been above average or better. In 2010, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C and those with five or more A* to C, including English and mathematics, was significantly above average. The proportion was 7% and 17% above average respectively. Students make good progress overall by the time they leave school. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are continuing to make good progress. An analysis of the school's tracking of students' performance, results from tests and the scrutiny of students' work all confirm that current standards are above average. Current data indicate that students are on track to meet their challenging targets in English and mathematics for 2011.

The improvement in standards and rates of progress is due in part to the overall good quality of teaching and learning across the school. Typical characteristics in lessons where teaching was good include: planning which built on previous learning; a good range of teaching styles; effective introductions and lesson activities; good challenge and high expectations and good student support. In these lessons, teachers make good use of assessment information to track students' progress, set targets and inform future planning but this is not a consistent practice across the school. The quality of planning to meet the needs of all students, which also provides opportunities for independent learning, is also variable. Some teachers mark work well and allow students to reflect on their own work or assess the work of other students against set criteria. However, this good practice is not yet embedded across all subjects or applied by all staff. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the small amount or the regularity of homework being set and the lack of marking in some subjects. However, a few parents and carers equally expressed concern about too much homework being set. Inspectors observed that the setting of homework in lessons was variable.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for students is good. Students are known as individuals, their needs are well understood and there is a strong sense of community spirit within school. Experienced staff are skilled at monitoring the students' progress and the support provided is effective in helping the students make good progress. Students who find it difficult to engage with school or in managing their behaviour respond well to the staff support. The school's curriculum is organised well,

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meets statutory requirements, provides for the students' needs and aspirations effectively and contributes to the improving outcomes. A very large majority of students, parents and carers say that the students feel safe and are kept safe in and around school. This was confirmed by inspectors as they observed students in lessons and generally around the school.

There are well-established systems in place for regularly monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work by senior leaders, middle leaders and the governing body. The school's self-evaluation is accurate overall; senior leaders and managers know the school well. The inspection team agreed with the large majority of the self-evaluation judgements made by the school. Middle managers are developing well in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility. However, the quality of subject development planning varies across departments and is not yet of a consistently high standard. The senior leaders are clear in their vision for the school and are keen to drive forward improvements. The school works well with a range of partners, particularly through the well-established and strong federation between local schools and colleges. It provides good value for money and has a good capacity to make further improvements.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory and showing some signs of improvement. Standards of attainment and rates of progress have been average overall for the last three years. The senior leaders have focused their efforts on improving the performance across the sixth form. Some of the strategies and developments include: the appointment of a new director of sixth form, a review of student tracking and monitoring systems and greater monitoring of teaching and learning. Many of the strategies and developments are too early in their implementation to have made an impact on the performance at this time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of all teaching and learning is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that the best practice in assessment, marking, and the setting of homework is adopted by all staff
 - ensuring that teachers' lesson planning meets the individual learning needs of all students
 - increasing the opportunities for independent learning in all lessons.
- Build on the recently introduced strategies and developments to raise standards of attainment and rates of progress across the sixth form by:
 - providing students with improved individual advice and guidance
 - ensuring that the strategies for raising the quality of teaching and learning in the main school are followed in the sixth form
 - improving the systems for tracking and monitoring students and informing them of their progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment is above average. In the large majority of lessons, the students are keen to learn. They are focused, eager to answer questions and take an active part in the

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lesson. As a result, they make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the topics being covered. Vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their learning. This is a result of the good academic and pastoral support they receive from staff who focus well on developing these students' literacy and numeracy skills as well as their social skills.

Most students enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their above-average attendance. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good with students generally showing respect and concern for the well-being of others. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions for unacceptable behaviour is low. However, a small minority of students, through their questionnaire, judged that behaviour is not always good especially among some younger students but that it improved as they moved further up the school. Students work well together and respond well in lessons when given the opportunity to work in groups.

Good opportunities are provided for students to develop a range of work-based and enterprise skills. Students make a strong contribution to local, regional and international communities. For example, the school's specialism helps develop the students' involvement and understanding of the local community through such activities as being sports, language and dance leaders. Students have access to a range of sporting activities and have a good understanding of how these activities improve their health. However, a small minority of students, parents and carers considered that only a limited range of sporting activities were available given the school's specialist status. A very large majority of students, parents and carers say that the students feel safe and are kept safe in and around school.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Where there is good teaching there is effective planning which builds on the students' prior learning, High expectations and a range of teaching and learning styles challenge the students well. There is some good marking and use of assessment information to identify any learning issues and promote improvement. However, the good practice in marking and assessment is not yet fully embedded across all subjects.

The school offers a good curriculum which meets most students' needs well. At Key Stage 4 students are offered flexible pathways and a good range of courses which are considerably enhanced through participation in the South Lakes Federation with provision of additional vocational courses. The introduction of more vocational subjects has improved some students' enjoyment, motivation and achievement. The school makes good use of its location and provides outdoor education for all students in Key Stage 3. Participation rates in extra-curricular activities are high with the three Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes having a good take up. The specialist sports college status has impacted well on many aspects of the school's life, for example, by helping to improve computer facilities and the quality of the outdoor areas and cricket facilities.

The school provides high-quality care, guidance and support for all students. There are good arrangements for students when moving in and out of school at key transition points. Guidance for students moving to Key Stage 4 is good and involves parents.

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Students who may be vulnerable or lack confidence receive excellent support and guidance from experienced staff. The school's strategic resource for students with physical and or medical needs is good and the students who use the facility say it really helps them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are working effectively to raise standards across the school. They, along with staff and the governing body, have a shared vision for raising achievement and the quality of teaching and learning as is evidenced in a well-constructed school improvement plan. The recent expansion of the senior leadership team has ensured that there is a strong body of leaders who are all moving forward with a common approach and agenda. The drive for improvement has contributed to the steady rise in students' attainment and rates of progress. The school's self-evaluation is used well to inform whole-school and departmental improvement plans. Middle leaders are developing their skills and, for some, additional training has supported the further development of these skills.

At the time of the inspection, the school met all the statutory safeguarding requirements. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively. It is actively involved in identifying priorities for improvement and is currently producing a five-year strategic plan. Target setting is realistic but challenging and the impact can be seen in the good progress and above-average attainment. School leaders work hard to ensure that all students are treated equally and that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. There are good strategies in place for developing the school as a focal point in the local community. Students have many opportunities to gain a sense of belonging to the local community but also to contribute to wider communities. The school is promoting aspects of community cohesion at local and international levels well.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with broadly average or slightly above-average levels of attainment. They make satisfactory progress and attainment overall is broadly average at the end of Year 13. An analysis of the school's data shows that students perform better on A2 courses than on AS-level courses. Most students follow more traditional AS and A2 courses, however, a small number follow applied A-level and BTEC courses. Students' performance on these two types of courses is above average but the numbers taking them are not high enough to impact on overall rates of progress and attainment. The school offers a good range of sixth form courses and the curriculum generally meets the students' needs and aspirations. Overall, there is a variable picture of performance between the different courses and subjects on offer. The school shows a good retention rate of students continuing from Year 12 to Year 13.

Senior leaders have started to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form. Their efforts have been successful as is seen in much good teaching that was observed during the inspection, but this improvement has not yet had time to have an impact on outcomes. Some variability in the quality of teaching across the sixth form remains and not all subjects encourage enough independent learning. Senior leaders are also seeking to improve the quality of advice and guidance offered to students. Students say they enjoy the sixth form; they feel safe and understand the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. They actively contribute to the life of the school through their role as prefects, mentors for younger students, members of the school council and as organisers of charity fundraising events.

The profile of the sixth form has been raised recently by including the director of sixth form on the senior leadership team. Although relatively new to the post, the sixth form leader has started to make an impact by improving procedures for assessing, tracking and monitoring students' progress. There is a clear vision for improvement with a clear picture

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of the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form. There are appropriate plans to support the improvement of outcomes, systems and working procedures but it is too early for these developments to have had an impact upon students' attainment and rates of progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Replies to the inspection questionnaire were received from the parents and carers of just under 15% of the students. This is lower than is normally experienced. The large majority who replied either strongly agreed or agreed with all of the statements. Some of the strongest positive responses related to: the children being safe; the school looking after their child's needs; being well informed about progress; and the quality of the school's leadership and management. These views match the overall findings of the inspectors. A small minority of responses expressed concerns relating to: support for children's learning; helping them to have a healthy lifestyle; dealing effectively with unacceptable behaviour; and the school's responses to parents' and carers' concerns. Inspectors noted these concerns and have informed the school about them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Lakes 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 642 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	29	57	61	8	9	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	30	32	60	64	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	30	58	62	6	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	27	60	64	7	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	23	61	65	8	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	20	55	59	14	15	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	22	58	62	13	14	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)	21	22	56	60	8	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	21	69	73	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	21	55	59	10	11	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	15	59	63	9	10	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	25	27	59	63	8	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	31	57	61	7	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 March 2011

Inspection of The Lakes School, Windermere, LA23 1HW

Dear Students,

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We have decided that The Lakes School is a good school. We recognise that you, along with the teachers, parents and carers and other helpers, all help to make it the way it is.

What we liked most about your school.

- The good care, guidance and support available for you.
- The way in which the school develops the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of your lives.
- The good range of curriculum opportunities available to you.
- The way in which you contribute to the school and wider community.
- The way in which you and your parents say you feel safe at school.
- The positive views that your parents and you have towards the school.
- The good attendance that you achieve at school.

We received 122 responses to your questionnaire from students across all year groups. You were very positive in response to most of the questions. The questions where you showed some concern was over behaviour in lower school and in the way the school helps you to be healthy. The inspectors did not have any concerns around behaviour seen during the inspection. Nevertheless the senior leaders have been made aware of your concerns and I know will explore these further with you.

There are certain things we have asked the senior leaders to do in order to improve your school further.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Raise the quality of all teaching and learning to good or better by:
 - ensuring that the best practice in assessment, marking of work and the setting of homework is carried out by all staff
 - ensuring that teacher planning meets all your individual learning needs
 - increasing the opportunities for you to undertake more independent learning in lessons.

Build on the recently introduced strategies and developments to raise standards of attainment and rates of progress across the sixth form by:

- providing you with improved individual advice and guidance
- ensuring that the strategies for raising the quality of teaching and learning in the main school are followed in the sixth form
- improving the systems for tracking and monitoring your progress and informing you of this progress.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and that you are proud of what has been achieved. You will see that there are still some important things to do in order to make further improvements. If you all continue to work together this should be achievable.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Sharples

Her Majesty's Inspector

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