

Lea Manor High School Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109709
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	356609
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lincoln James
Headteacher	Christine Lenihan
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Forty lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. In addition, meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of students and the local authority. A range of documentation was scrutinised including the school's self-review analysis, the school development plan, analysis of the attainment and progress of students, records of lesson observations, 105 parents' and carers' questionnaires and questionnaires from staff and students.

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

- How effectively are the various measures designed to raise attainment being implemented?
- How effective are the school's efforts to boost the overall level of performance in literacy?
- How well is the school monitoring teaching and learning to ensure that all groups of students are well provided for?
- How well does the school's developing curriculum ensure that the needs of all are met and that attainment continues to improve?

Information about the school

Lea Manor High School is larger than the average secondary school. It is a specialist performing arts college that has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools status and Investors in People accreditation. Approximately half the students are of White British heritage. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is high compared with other schools, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, but the proportion with statements of their special educational needs is below average. Students' special educational needs and/or disabilities are invariably associated with behavioural, emotional and social needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. A higher-than-average percentage of students join or leave the school's year groups during the academic year, other than at the usual starting time.

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

This is a good school. It is improving and many aspects of what it offers to its students are outstanding. All students receive a rich and varied education. Aspects that are outstanding include: the curriculum, the care, guidance and support provided and the promotion of community cohesion, especially in students' work undertaken in the local community. Students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is also outstanding and, in part, reflected in award of Healthy School status. The provision made for the students' personal, social and emotional development is difficult to fault and contributes strongly to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's success as a specialist performing arts college contributes significantly to boosting students' confidence and self-esteem.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good, having improved well since the previous inspection. This improvement has helped to boost attainment because teaching and learning are good, with examples of high-quality practice being seen in several subjects. Attainment is average, but there has been a trend of improvement over the last three years, especially for the very large majority of students who attend regularly. The progress students make is good overall, but it is not always consistent. Most students enter the school with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy. Considerable emphasis has been placed on improving literacy, in particular, and work undertaken over the last four years to improve skills in reading and phonics, for example, is having success. However, in lessons, not all staff consistently seize every opportunity to develop the students' literacy skills. Key words and subject vocabulary are not always displayed or developed properly. Basic techniques such as encouraging students to read aloud, or making presentations to their peers, are not always utilised, nor are students consistently required to write in detail, or write for different audiences. These techniques are used fully in lessons where learning is most effective, but where learning is satisfactory rather than good, a common feature is that literacy is not being given sufficient priority.

The use of data and other information about students' performance and potential has improved considerably, especially at a whole-school level. Teachers' practice in the use of assessment is good, overall. All students are set appropriately ambitious targets and monitoring and tracking of their performance at all levels have improved well since the previous inspection. This good practice, too, is helping to accelerate progress. However, the information available is not always used with full consistency to help plan lessons that will enable all students to progress well. Where learning is most effective, teachers know their students well and set challenging, individual targets and monitor progress effectively. Where learning is slower, such strategies are not applied consistently.

Students feel very safe and, consequently, thrive with the confidence to take full advantage of the many educational opportunities available. Attendance has improved

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considerably and is in line with the national average. Since the previous inspection, attainment has improved, teaching and learning are stronger, the curriculum responds to the needs of all students, resulting in higher attainment. These improvements and the effective leadership and management that inspires them demonstrate the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by ensuring that, in all lessons, staff:
 - consistently seize all opportunities for students to make progress by developing their literacy skills, by always displaying key words and vocabulary and checking that meanings and relevance are understood by all
 - take every opportunity to encourage the students to write in an extended form and for different audiences.
 - use assessment and other information accurately to make sure that all students are always appropriately challenged to reach the targets set.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In a large majority of lessons, learning is at least good; in a minority it is even better. Students frequently enjoy their work and, where learning is most effective, they help one another in their studies. For example, in an excellent Year 10 drama lesson, students collaborated impressively, made suggestions and helped each other to secure high standards. Several students told inspectors that the quality of their learning had improved. The school sets all its students challenging targets and monitors the progress of different groups well. These procedures have become more robust since the previous inspection and have contributed to improved outcomes, especially in English and mathematics. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, make comparable rates of progress. An impressive feature of the school's outcomes is that different groups of students gain better GCSE results than expected, based on their prior attainment. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well because of the careful support offered. Students who join the school after the start of Year 7 are integrated well and all students benefit from the improved target setting and monitoring procedures that are now well established.

Students say the school is a safe environment and they are confident that staff will respond effectively to any concerns. Behaviour seen in lessons was consistently good. Around the school's large campus, it was equally good with most students displaying common sense and maturity. The only issue identified is that a very small minority are slow to return to lessons after the lunch break. Students are strongly encouraged to follow lifestyles that reflect an excellent understanding of health issues. This is reflected in high participation rates in sport, for example. Their understanding of potential risks to their health and well-being is also well developed. Considerable efforts are made to develop the students' key skills, especially in literacy and numeracy. Much advice is also offered about the career pathways at the end of Key Stage 4. The promotion of future economic well-being is satisfactory because of the inconsistencies that exist in lessons in promoting literacy in particular.

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Students have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and value fairness and justice. They have a keen sense of life beyond their immediate locality. Their understanding of multiculturalism and the spiritual aspects of their lives are developing very well. These aspects are boosted through the 'Opening Minds' humanities lessons in Year 7, and through work in subjects such as drama, art and music. The school's specialist status also makes a significant contribution to the students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and its wider community. They are proud of their school and they also contribute to the wider community including, for example, being involved in a regeneration project based in the immediate area around the school.

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	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

A large majority of lessons are purposeful, challenging and enjoyable. Most lessons involve students in a range of learning activities that are well matched to their interests and ability. In most observed lessons, learning was at least good because of the level of challenge and the opportunities students had to learn by doing things for themselves. Where learning is good or better, lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and staff challenge the students to explain their understanding. In such cases, students also benefit from the good subject knowledge of the staff. Teachers' expectations are usually high with students responding well. In lessons where learning is less strong, a contributory factor is

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that staff have an inconsistent approach to developing literacy. Unevenness in learning also arises because some teachers are not using assessment information consistently to ensure that the work set always matches individual needs.

An excellent and continually evolving curriculum is offered. The curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11, gives students a very extensive range of learning opportunities and is thoughtfully enhanced by a range of suitable vocational qualifications. Specialist performing arts status extensively enhances the curriculum, both through formal lessons and extra-curricular activities, such as clubs and school productions. Enrichment provision is also impressive in sport and, in the school's desire to boost levels of attainment, especially in English and mathematics, with revision clubs and booster lessons. Master classes are offered after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays. All students have ample scope to immerse themselves in a range of academic, cultural, social and sporting activities. Personal, social and health education is provided for very well and makes a significant contribution to students' personal development, such as adopting healthy lifestyles and understanding risk. The curriculum improvements that have taken place, especially in terms of vocational education, have led to greatly improved outcomes because the needs of different groups are being catered for very well. This means that all students by the end of Year 11 have clear pathways to follow and this is reflected in the school's very low figure for those who leave and do not continue in education, employment or training.

The school's systems to care for and support students are outstanding. All students are valued and considerable care is taken to ensure that transition to the school in Year 7 is calm and orderly. The school's work with families, students and a range of agencies to sustain the learning, personal development and well-being of individual students facing challenging circumstances is very strong. This is a school where every child certainly does matter and where each individual is valued highly. Improvements in attainment can also be attributed to the work undertaken to ensure better attendance. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of persistently absent students has almost halved. The figure is now in line with the national average. The headline attendance rate has also improved, from below average to a level that is now equal to the national average.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has improved well since its previous inspection. This is because of the outstanding and visionary leadership of the headteacher. In her quest to raise standards and improve the prospects of all students, the headteacher has been supported well by

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her senior colleagues and all other staff. There is a clear commitment to obtaining improved outcomes for all groups of students, regardless of their background or level of ability. The promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are good, with careful tracking of students' progress and clarity about how the school will provide for the specific needs of its students. Equality of opportunity is also fostered well through the specialist status as students from many different backgrounds are given opportunities to perform and help with productions.

Self-evaluation is largely accurate and there is a clear understanding of where improvements are needed. Any areas of underperformance are identified and tackled with vigour and determination resulting in much improved outcomes. The effective governing body takes its responsibilities seriously. Members successfully ensure that the students are safe and that all safeguarding requirements are met. Child protection procedures are applied well and risk assessments are thorough and detailed. Staff improvement and training are given high priority, and are recognised in the Investors in People accreditation. Specialist status leads to the school being at the centre of its local community. This, together with the school's highly effective work to promote and celebrate diversity, and to analyse the impact of its work in the local community and beyond, has helped to ensure that community cohesion is outstanding.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Although fewer parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire than is usual in inspections of secondary schools, responses indicate a positive level of satisfaction about the education offered. This is a view that is shared by the inspection team. Though few written comments were made, most were favourable. One respondent commented: 'Lea Manor is an excellent school. It is well managed.' Another commented: 'My child has

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been able to participate in many trips, visits and vacations which have greatly benefited her in her studies.' Some concerns were expressed about how the school takes account of suggestions and ideas but no evidence was found to indicate that this is an issue impeding the school's progress. The school's work in developing 'the parent voice' makes a strong contribution in this respect. A very small minority raised concerns about behaviour management. Inspectors looked at this, especially in lessons and in public areas. Overall, they concluded that behaviour is good and well managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lea Manor High School Performing Arts College 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 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1189 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	30	64	61	8	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	30	29	66	63	6	6	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	44	51	49	4	4	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	30	55	52	10	10	5	5
The teaching is good at this school	22	21	68	65	12	11	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	22	68	65	10	10	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	19	65	62	17	16	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)	26	25	63	60	9	9	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	28	64	61	5	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	31	49	47	8	8	9	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	23	55	52	15	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	35	57	54	5	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	33	60	57	6	6	2	2

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.



24 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Lea Manor High School Performing Arts College, Luton, LU3 3TL

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit. I wish to thank you for making us so welcome and for your responses to our questionnaires. You told us that your school is good and that there are many things for you to do. We agree. Lea Manor is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding.

Staff in your school are committed to helping you to improve. Most of the lessons we observed were good learning experiences for you, helping you make good progress in your work. Specialist performing arts status helps you to gain confidence and provides you with many opportunities. My colleague and I who watched a scene enacted by Year 10 drama students were moved by the quality and sensitivity of the performances. I also greatly enjoyed Year 9 music students' tribute to Michael Jackson. The dancing was especially impressive. All the inspectors were impressed with your excellent understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe. We were equally impressed with your impressive contributions to your school and wider communities.

Although we have concluded that you are making good progress, we have left the school with some areas for further improvement. We want to see you reach higher levels of attainment and to do this we want your school to:

- consistently help you to develop your literacy skills by always displaying key words and checking that meanings and relevance are understood by all of you
- seize every opportunity to encourage you to write in an extended form and for different audiences
- use assessment information accurately to make sure that all of you are always challenged in your work to reach your targets.

You can help to achieve these outcomes by attending regularly, behaving well and being attentive and keen in class as almost all of you are already. We enjoyed meeting you and would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham

Lead Inspector

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