

Lakers School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115774
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	379144
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Massey HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	696
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Duggan
Headteacher	Alison Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 October 2010
School address	Five Acres Coleford Gloucestershire GL16 7QW
Telephone number	01594 832263
Fax number	01594 832486
Email address	admin@lakers.gloucs.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	9–10 November 2011
Inspection number	379144

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 27 lessons taught by 26 teachers and carried out four 'learning walks'. The Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority were contacted by telephone and meetings were held with another member of the governing body, teachers and groups of students, including members of the student leadership team. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents, including the school's planning and monitoring records, and responses to the questionnaires from 306 parents and carers, 16 staff and 135 students.

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

- Whether there is convincing evidence that learning and progress of students in all year groups are improving securely and quickly.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement, including the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Whether the school's leaders, including the governing body, are effective in monitoring the school's work and can accurately identify those areas that need to improve.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most secondary schools and is located in a small town in the Forest of Dean. Student numbers have fallen very slightly since the last inspection, with Years 8 and 9 smaller than other year groups. Most students are of White British heritage, with few speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average in younger year groups, but below average for older groups.

The school has specialist status for business and enterprise and is part of a cooperative trust with local primary schools. About a third of the students in Years 10 and 11 are involved in a shared curriculum with other local schools and colleges. The Royal Forest of Dean College is located on the same site as the school.

When last inspected, the school was given a notice to improve because it was performing significantly less well in English and mathematics than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has made progress in improving students' achievement so that it is now satisfactory. Unvalidated results from the most recent GCSE examinations show that students' attainment remains low because their English and mathematics skills are below average. However, there were significant improvements in other subjects, particularly in the proportion of students attaining the higher grades. Current students are making satisfactory and accelerating progress over time in both mathematics and English. The legacy of underachievement from previous years is reducing rapidly.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have tackled robustly the identified areas for development. They have given high priority to developing teachers' skills by using the expertise already within the school and have also encouraged the role of curriculum team leaders in monitoring the quality of provision. This has resulted in a significant and growing proportion of good or better teaching which has led to improved achievement. The school's leaders have thus demonstrated satisfactory capacity to improve. Difficulties in staffing in English and mathematics are now resolved and so the quality of teaching is also more consistent.

Students enjoy being at school and this is evident from the rapidly improving rate of attendance, which is now above average. Positive relationships between staff and students encourage good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. A broad and balanced curriculum, with a good range of vocational courses, supported by strong local school and college partnerships, means that students in Years 10 and 11 have a wide range of options from which to choose. The quality of care, guidance and support provided is good, with a strong emphasis on monitoring individual students' academic progression and ensuring that they are well prepared for the future.

Students are cooperative and willing to learn, but in some lessons they can be passive, especially when teaching is dull. However, when lessons are stimulating and exciting, students are noticeably keener to learn and participate enthusiastically. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and skilled, targeted questioning is frequently used to develop students' understanding, although sometimes this is the only method used to ensure that students with different needs and abilities are adequately catered for. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities

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

make satisfactory progress in lessons, often because they have support from effective teaching assistants. Teachers' planning does not routinely identify or take into account the needs of individual students, neither are resources and activities provided that will ensure that each one makes the maximum progress. This is particularly the case for some younger students who have low literacy skills and find it difficult to access the full curriculum. Although extra support is provided for them, the programme lacks urgency and its impact is not monitored sufficiently closely. Teachers do not yet have the skills to support these students effectively in lessons.

The school's leaders put a strong emphasis on team work and share responsibility cooperatively at both senior and middle management level. A culture of accountability is developing across the school which has led to improvements in teaching and in students' progress. However, the recent strong emphasis on day-to-day management means that long-term strategic planning lacks clear direction. Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, but systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the actions they have taken are not always used effectively to inform future planning. Roles and responsibilities are not sufficiently precise, so members of the school staff are not always clear of their role in improvement.

Most parents and carers are happy with the education the school is providing and believe the school is led well. However, although their views are collected regularly, one in four feels that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns even though there is weekly communication through a newsletter. The governing body and senior team do not systematically provide feedback about the actions taken to tackle issues that parents and carers have raised either through questionnaires or individually. Parents and carers are not routinely involved in supporting their children's learning.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Raise students' attainment and further accelerate the rate at which they make progress by:
 - continuing to share the best practice in teaching and learning already in the school to develop teachers' skills
 - ensuring that lessons are sufficiently exciting and stimulating to motivate students to learn
 - encouraging teachers to focus more strongly on identifying barriers to individual students' learning and then providing resources and activities that meet their needs
 - providing clear success criteria for students in each lesson, followed by thorough feedback so that students know exactly what they need to do to

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

reach or exceed their targets in each subject.

- Improve reading and writing skills, especially for younger students by:
 - ensuring that students with low literacy levels are identified quickly
 - using a range of strategies to ensure that reading for these students improves rapidly, so that they can all access the curriculum
 - developing teachers' skills so there is a systematic approach and consistent language to support reading and writing across the school.

- Improve the quality of strategic planning by:
 - ensuring there are clear systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken
 - using the information collected to identify clear priorities tightly linked to measurable success criteria
 - ensuring that roles and responsibilities to implement the school improvement plan are explicit.

- Ensure that the governing body and the school's senior leaders improve the consistency and quality of the school's communication with parents and carers by:
 - informing them regularly about how the school has acted on their suggestions and concerns
 - involving them more actively in supporting their children's learning
 - developing systems to raise awareness of the school's policies and how the impact of these is monitored and reviewed.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

In the 2011 GCSE examinations, unvalidated data show that there was a modest rise in the proportion of students attaining grades A* to C in mathematics. However, attainment in English did not rise. This means that the proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics remained below the national average. The school has analysed the reasons for this thoroughly and taken robust measures to tackle the problems. Evidence from the school's assessment data and from lesson observations during the inspection shows that the rate at which students are making progress is now rising rapidly, particularly in mathematics. Improvement in students' achievement in English since the last inspection was initially slower, but is now beginning to accelerate. In both subjects, a higher proportion of students in every year group are making satisfactory progress from their starting points and some are making good progress. This is largely the result of better teaching. Even though there is a substantial legacy of underachievement for current students in Year 11, data indicate that they are already on track to attain results in 2012 that are much closer to the national averages. The gap between the performance of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and other students is closing and is smaller than the national figure. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory and rising rapidly.

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

Students say that they enjoy school and that they feel safe. If they have difficulties, they say there is always a member of staff to talk to and generally bullying incidents are dealt with effectively. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe, especially after a recent presentation involving parents and carers, the police and the local community on how to act responsibly on social networking sites and on the internet. Students have a good awareness of how to keep themselves healthy, with a high proportion taking school meals. There is a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities, although more boys take part than girls. As a result of activities linked to business and enterprise specialist status, students have a sound understanding of the world of work. They have good information and communication technology skills, but literacy and numeracy skills are more limited. There are opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the school and local community, but these do not involve all students. Although moral and social development are good, students’ understanding of their role in a multicultural United Kingdom is underdeveloped.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

A higher proportion of good teaching is leading to accelerating achievement for students. Since the last inspection, the quality of assessment has improved and reliable data are now available so students’ progress is measured regularly. In the most effective lessons, prior knowledge and current assessment data are used to inform planning, but where teaching is weaker, sometimes the work is pitched too low and expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough. In the best

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

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

lessons, the teaching is entirely focused on individual students’ learning. The pace and the work provided are adjusted as the teacher responds to the answers students give to questions, so that individual students’ needs are met. However, this is not always the case, and sometimes completing the task takes priority over the quality of the learning.

Regular assessment points during the year and a robust system for tracking progress ensure that students who are underachieving are identified quickly. Students say that the quality of marking and feedback is improving, although it is still inconsistent across the school. Most students are aware of the target grades or levels they are aiming for and how they are currently performing. However, because the criteria for success in each lesson are not made explicit and marking is not linked to them, students are not consistently aware of exactly what they need to do in order to improve in each subject. During the inspection, very few examples were seen of students assessing their own learning. In some lessons, technology is used effectively to enhance learning.

Recent adjustments to the curriculum have increased the time available for modern foreign languages in order allow students to meet the requirements of the new English Baccalaureate. The school has had a recent focus on developing skills in literacy and numeracy, with imaginative and creative use of cross-curricular work in Years 7 and 8. This priority is also evident in classroom displays, some marking and occasionally teaching. However, opportunities are frequently missed to develop these skills within the context of other subjects, or to use the potential of the vertical tutoring system to support younger students in reading.

The personal, health and social education programme is effectively taught by specialist teachers in Years 7, 8 and 9, and also covers religious education and citizenship. However, the course taught by tutors in Years 10 and 11 is not valued by students. They are, nevertheless, well prepared as they transfer to further education or employment at the end of Year 11 as a result of good quality advice. In 2011, every student leaving the school entered either further education or employment. Students also describe the transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 as smooth, and say they have good advice in Year 9 about choosing their GCSE courses. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are taken care of well and teaching assistants provide consistent support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior team have provided coaching and support to enhance the skills of middle managers. Increased autonomy and a regular forum to share good practice have led to improvements in the way in which teaching is monitored. This is not yet completely consistent across subjects, but is leading to increased accountability for teachers and is generating ambition. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are fully committed to improve outcomes for students. The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account and has recently been strengthened and energised with new members, bringing additional expertise and rigour to the governing body. This is especially the case for safeguarding arrangements, which although satisfactory overall, have some shortcomings in their administration. As the school’s self-evaluation becomes more accurate, governors’ understanding of strengths and weaknesses is becoming increasingly effective in supporting the school and holding it to account. Arrangements for safeguarding students are secure, especially through health and safety and child protection procedures. However, systems for reviewing and monitoring the impact of policies are not sufficiently robust.

The school’s inclusive approach ensures that students from all groups are treated equally. Assessment information is now being widely used to check the equality of outcomes of different groups of students. Work to improve the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory, with much activity locally and an international link with a school in Kenya. Planning is less well focused on tackling students’ limited awareness of cultural diversity in this country.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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

Views of parents and carers

Almost a third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is much higher than usually found. Most were happy with their child's experience and said that their child enjoyed school and was kept safe. Over half of those who made additional comments said that specific staff had made a significant difference to their child's experience at school. Others mentioned the friendly and helpful approach of the staff in reception. Although a few parents and carers felt that communication was exceptionally good the main concern of those writing additional comments was that they were not well enough informed about their child's progress and that although their concerns were listened to, they were not acted on. Inspectors have identified this as an area for improvement. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about the way in which unacceptable behaviour is dealt with in the school. Inspectors judged behaviour both in lessons and around the school as good. Systems for managing behaviour are well understood by students and the overwhelming majority respond appropriately to sanctions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lakers 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 306 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 696 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	33	179	58	19	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	105	34	184	60	8	3	4	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	90	29	169	55	31	10	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	26	180	59	27	9	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	23	196	64	19	6	3	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	62	20	188	61	40	3	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	17	194	63	42	14	6	2
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)	98	32	166	54	19	6	2	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	79	26	178	58	31	10	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	23	162	53	43	14	11	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	20	168	55	39	13	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	98	32	171	56	19	6	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	104	34	164	54	21	7	6	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	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
Pupil 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).

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 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.

11 November 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Lakers School, Coleford, GL16 7QW

This letter is to thank you for your help during the recent inspection and to give you our findings. You may remember that at its last inspection, the school was judged as needing significant improvement. From this inspection, our evidence shows that this is no longer the case and that the school is satisfactory and improving. This is what we found out, and the further improvements we have recommended.

- You are now making satisfactory progress and achievement is rising, although by the time you leave school, standards are still lower than those found nationally.
- Most of you enjoy school and attend regularly. You behave well, want to learn and you get on well together. You need to keep doing these things.
- Most of you told us you feel safe and well cared for and that the staff are there to help if you need them.
- Teaching is improving so more of you are making good progress. This is not the case in all lessons, and there are still improvements to be made, especially by making sure that the work and help you are given match your individual needs.
- You have a good curriculum but, in all subjects, you need to be given more opportunities to develop your literacy and numeracy skills.
- The school's senior leaders, staff and governors are making improvements. We have asked them to find out what works and what does not so they can plan really effectively for the future.

Your parents and carers would like to feel that their opinions are taken into account so they know what changes the school is making to act on what they suggest. We have asked the school's leaders to give your parents and carers regular feedback and to encourage them to be more involved in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**