

Lyndon School Humanities College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104114
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	377016
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

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	1325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Professor Derek Sheldon
Headteacher	Diane Fellowes
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2008
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Cartwright	Her Majesty's Inspector Additional inspector
Terence Payne	Additional inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional inspector
Christine Heppleston	Additional inspector
Brigid Quest-Ritson	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed substantial parts of 46 lessons and also visited other classes for short periods of time. Judgements on the quality of teaching were made for 46 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, governors, and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school self-evaluation documents, school development plans, current student academic data, and analysed 340 parental questionnaires, 136 student questionnaires and 84 staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most secondary schools. Most students are White British. The proportion of students from other heritage backgrounds is average, and these students come from many different ethnic groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is average and very few are at an early stage of acquiring English. A lower than average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is average. There are a small number of students on roll with hearing impairment, supported by the local authority's hearing impairment centre on site. The school is governed by a Trust comprising local large business partners, and further and higher education providers. The headteacher took up post in September 2011, after a period when the school had an acting headteacher following the retirement of the previous headteacher. The school has recently been awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark. The school meets current floor standards. The school is a specialist school for the Humanities.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- The school is satisfactory. Good leadership from the recently appointed headteacher has arrested a deterioration in standards since the previous inspection. Her high expectations and drive for consistency are welcomed by staff and are generating an improved a sense of pride amongst students. Provision for fostering students’ social, spiritual, moral and cultural development is good because of a broad and balanced curriculum and good partnerships with business and higher education providers. The school is not good because recent improvements in teaching have not yet led to good progress.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Progress in lessons, and over time, is satisfactory, for all groups of learners, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching is satisfactory. The majority of lessons seen were good. Teaching is good when students are engaged in interesting and challenging activities. In satisfactory lessons, activities are not always adapted sufficiently to meet students’ different learning needs. Not all marking gives clear praise and written feedback on how students might improve their work.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. Students contribute positively to a calm and orderly environment in the school where students are safe and well cared for. Inspectors found no disruptive behaviour in lessons or around school. The headteacher insists on high standards of dress and consistent use of the school’s behaviour policy, and this is improving student behaviour quickly.
- Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed headteacher swiftly identified strengths and weaknesses in teaching and its evaluation. With the senior leadership team she is effectively tackling low standards, underachievement and inconsistent application of school policy. Performance management systems are robust, including that used by the governing body when holding the headteacher to account.

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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?

- Further raise achievement through improved teaching that;
 - ensures lesson activities are pitched at the right level for each student, so they can meet their learning potential
 - promotes more active engagement with learning, including collaboration between pupils, and sufficient time for students to consolidate their understanding
 - uses assessment strategies in lessons that enable teachers to accurately diagnose the learning of each student, then adapt the learning activity as necessary
 - ensures consistent and regular marking of students' work that includes written feedback on how they should further improve their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students of all abilities and backgrounds achieve satisfactorily, because of sound teaching and well-targeted support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Students with hearing impairment are effectively included in the whole school curriculum, and are achieving in line with expectations based on their academic starting points. Most parents say their child is making good progress, but inspectors did not find secure evidence that most students are making better than expected, and therefore good, progress. The deployment of teaching assistants and the systematic checking of the progress any students who have special needs is very effectively monitored by the school's special educational needs coordinator. She then quickly adjusts support and directs additional intervention for these students as required.

On average, the attainment of students when they join the school is a little below average and has been rising in recent years. In 2011, results in examinations were below average in most subjects. In particular, results in mathematics were disappointing. Staff changes, better oversight by the new senior management team and adjustments to intervention and revision classes have quickly ensured progress in this subject is now in line with national expectations. Students in the current Year 11 have already gained more GCSE grades in English and mathematics than last year, with further gains predicted in June 2012. This has stemmed the previous trend of widening gaps between different groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. Frequent monitoring of progress by all subjects is helping to inform managers of where intervention is required, and also keep students

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and parents and carers informed of their child's progress against expected targets.

In the better lessons activities are matched to students' ability and prior knowledge. Here, inspectors observed students engaging well with the learning and trying hard. They enjoy challenges, solving problems, debating ideas with partners and teachers, conducting practical investigations, and having the chance for self-expression through performing and expressive arts.

Quality of teaching

The majority of lessons seen by inspectors were good, with some outstanding. Most parents and almost all students agree. No inadequate teaching was seen. The best lessons seen ensure students of all abilities have tasks that stretch them academically and engage them emotionally. These lessons capture their interest in the subject matter, and give them time to think about the ideas and concepts they are learning. This in turn deepens their spiritual, moral and social understanding. Here, teachers continuously monitor student progress, adjusting the details of the task to keep up the pace of learning. They provide choices for students, for example in selecting the difficulty of worksheet, or in setting extension tasks quickly to save more-able students repeating easy work. High quality student work is celebrated, for example a Year 11 student's short story was read 'in role' by the teacher; the story quickly captured the attention of the class, because of the skilful use of writing techniques by its author; the class suddenly realised why those techniques are at the heart of good story telling.

The taught curriculum is predominantly academic, but broad, balanced and flexible enough to meet learners' needs. Year 11 students said they enjoyed their option lessons rather more than the core subjects of English, mathematics and science but inspectors did not find any differences in overall teaching quality between subjects.

At times, however, students have too few opportunities to work independently. Occasionally too much teacher talk means many students cannot contribute, and when they are asked, often choose not to because the question is too easy. Here teaching is satisfactory either because lessons are too controlled by the teacher and pace either a bit too slow, or too fast for some students who do not have time to complete each task before being rushed onto the next. There is not enough time for collaborative work or for independent and extended writing. Teachers are not always effectively assessing individual student progress and so miss opportunities to adapt their delivery to ensure a better match to students' learning needs.

As students themselves acknowledge, homework is inconsistently set and marked. The current school marking policy does not provide for sufficiently high quality written feedback to students on what has gone well and what needs improving. The school has rightly identified the policy is no longer suitable and is under review.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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Behaviour is satisfactory. The school is a calm and friendly place for students, and staff. Almost all parents believe the school keeps their children safe, and almost every student enjoys coming to school. Standards of dress and the use of the schools' behaviour policy have been re-established, with staff supported in following through concerns. This has raised the profile amongst students and parents of the importance of consistent good behaviour, and for many has been a challenge to their previously lower expectations. This has resulted in an usually high proportion of parental and student questionnaires that suggest lessons are sometimes disrupted by students. Inspectors looked carefully for evidence to support that view, but found none in lessons or around the school. Students did agree that behaviour is getting better and that most staff are now consistently operating the behaviour and rewards system. Serious indiscipline is rare, with exclusions decreasing from average levels. School monitoring of call-outs and detentions also shows declining numbers now from an earlier peak as the new headteacher insisted that school codes were enforced. Attendance is improving and has just gone above average. There are good systems of support for students finding attendance a challenge. The school has a strong team of support teachers and staff that work effectively with students and families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Most, but not all, students were confident that the school deals with bullying in all its forms well. All students have received recent training in how to handle cyber-bullying, and how to stay safe on line. However, a few students commented that the response they get when raising concerns depends on who they approach.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. A period of some staff turbulence at all levels since the previous inspection may in part explain declining academic progress measures up till 2011. There are still some temporary posts, and inspectors agree with comments from a few parents and that some students experienced too many changes in staff. The new headteacher has quickly identified strengths, and weaknesses, and her enthusiasm and sense of moral purpose has galvanised staff to help restore a sense of pride amongst the entire learning community at Lyndon. Performance management systems are in place and are tackling shortfalls. School leaders have recently recognised that previous criteria for monitoring teaching quality was giving an optimistic picture; too much attention was paid to actions done by teachers in whole class discussions, and not enough to the engagement of students in active learning. Some school policies are already under review, in particular marking and assessment, which will help tackle the points for improvement. Already, achievement has recovered to at least satisfactory, with the majority of lessons being good, behaviour is sound and improving, weaknesses in teaching identified accurately and being tackled robustly. With the strong strategic direction set by the governing body and being executed in practice through new leadership, the school is demonstrating an effective capacity for further improvements.

The school has received awards for its inclusive curriculum and support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Relationships between different ethnic groups are excellent, and the school staff profile mirrors modern

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multicultural Britain. Outcomes for all groups are equally sound, confirming effective equality of provision. Arrangements to support transition from primary school are good. The school is fully compliant with current requirements for safeguarding. Some aspects of the old buildings are not ideal, with some students concerned about the state of toilets to the extent they will not use them.

Governors had already begun to address what they felt were endemic low aspirations held by some families and their students. This is done through the Trust, which essentially brings business, community, further and higher education partners to the school. In turn, visits, visitors, placements and training related to work and further studies are part of the students' curriculum and substantially enhance their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The school's humanities specialism is making a satisfactory contribution to the broad and well balanced taught curriculum.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

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

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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



28 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Lyndon School Humanities College, Solihull, B92 8EJ

Thank you for your courteous welcome and positive contributions to discussions we had during our visit to your school. The school is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education and is improving under the leadership of your new headteacher. She has quickly improved some previously weak elements in student achievement, and has accurately worked out what further improvements are required. We also think the academic curriculum and the wider range of trips and visits are making a big positive difference to your understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural matters. We recognise that the school is vigorously emphasising basic standards of conduct, including dress codes and behaviour. We think the school's high profile on raising standards of behaviour and achievement focus lies behind the finding of our questionnaire and discussions suggesting some lessons are occasionally disrupted. We did not find any evidence of serious disruption.

There are aspects of teaching which we have asked the school to further improve. These are:

- pitching lessons at your level so you can meet your potential
- giving you activities that you find interesting, letting you collaborate with others and giving you time to understand the learning objective
- checking your learning during the lesson and then adapting the learning activity as necessary
- ensuring your work is consistently and regularly marked, with written feedback on how to further improve their work.

You can help by responding to that advice as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

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