

# The Lacon Childe School

Love Lane, Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster, DY14 8PE

**Inspection dates** 9–10 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students achieve well, particularly in English and science, where they reach levels of attainment that are above the national averages.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make at least good progress because of the expert help that they receive.
- The quality of teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Teachers usually plan lessons well so that students are given tasks at the right level of difficulty, and prepare materials well to help students develop independence.
- Students say how much they value the way teachers give up their time to provide additional support.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Their positive attitudes and the warm relationships that are evident throughout the school make a significant contribution to their learning.
- They say that they feel safe and very well known and cared for, bullying is rare and adults support them well.
- The headteacher is well supported by his senior team and governing body, and they have been rigorous in ensuring that the good quality of teaching and students' achievement is maintained despite the constraints of a declining budget.
- Students' experiences in different subjects are enhanced by the sports specialism, and the learning environment and facilities are exceptional.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment and rates of progress in mathematics are average, and require improvement because the leadership and management of this subject have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good.
- Occasionally, teachers do not plan tasks at the exactly right level of difficulty, or ensure that students have enough opportunities to work responsibly on their own.
- Although most teachers provide helpful feedback on students' work, they do not consistently give clear written information on how to reach their targets, to enable them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Although students support each other well, teachers miss opportunities in some lessons to promote teamwork by encouraging students to actively work together.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, four of which were joint observations with the senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, a representative of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and staff, including middle managers. Inspectors also responded to phone calls from individual parents.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at: policies; development planning; monitoring records; data related to the tracking of students’ progress; safeguarding documents; and samples of students’ work.
- The views of 47 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, along with the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
Elaine Long	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There are very few students from minority ethnic heritages and almost none who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has succeeded in attracting more students than predicted, which has reduced the impact of falling budgets.

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

- Raise achievement in mathematics to match that in English and science by:
  - sharing the existing good practice in other subjects to develop the leadership and management of mathematics, and establish a consistently high quality of teaching of mathematics across the school.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or outstanding, by:
  - planning tasks and providing resources that meet all students' individual needs
  - promoting students' independent learning by always providing clear written feedback on their work to enable them to reach and exceed their targets
  - providing more opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning and discuss their work together.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with broadly average levels of basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics, although this varies year on year, and make good progress. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five good GCSE passes including both English and mathematics in 2011 was above average, although this fell slightly in 2012.
- Attainment and progress in English and science have been consistently well above average, while in mathematics they have been broadly average over the past three years. Results in 2012 in modern foreign languages showed a strong improvement on the previous year, when they were low.
- Robust systems are helping to accelerate reading across the school. All English lessons begin with a reading session. The higher-attaining students are provided with reading lists of challenging books covering a wide variety of texts. The lowest-attaining readers are quickly identified and given the extra help they need. As a result, students show a great enjoyment of reading, including reading e-books using the tablet computers provided.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, those eligible for the pupil premium and the very few who speak English as an additional language make at least equal progress to their peers, and sometimes even better, as a result of the high-quality individual support, care and encouragement provided for them.
- Students display outstanding attitudes towards their learning and are consistently attentive and keen to do well. They enjoy the opportunities provided to develop independence. For example, in a French lesson, students were able to develop their vocabulary using a wide variety of resources, including word lists that encouraged them to be adventurous when describing the television and films they enjoy.
- Students rise to their teachers' high expectations and show excitement at the tasks set for them. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson, students showed a high level of enjoyment in producing a mosaic in the style of Gaudi, knowing exactly what to do to develop their work and looking forward to viewing his work when they visit Barcelona later in the year.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders' rigorous checks show that teaching is typically good or outstanding. Lesson observations during the inspection confirmed this. There is, however, some inconsistency, particularly in the way in which teachers plan their lessons. This sometimes results in all students undertaking the same task rather than having it matched more closely to their individual needs.
- In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons where learning can build progressively. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students were able to build and practise skills a little at a time, before attempting their creative writing. They were encouraged to close their eyes and imagine the setting before writing a list of adventurous adjectives to describe the sight, sound and feel of what they were going to write about.
- Most teachers convey high expectations and ensure that their students understand what is required to produce a high-quality response. Students say that teachers provide helpful verbal

feedback so that they know how to improve and develop their work. Some inconsistency, however, in the quality of written feedback means that students do not always have a clear idea of their next steps in achieving their targets, or have the opportunity to respond to the advice given by practising skills or trying another challenge.

- Resources are generally well prepared, although in a few lessons opportunities are missed to tailor these resources to support lower attainers or to provide additional challenge for the most able. Students told inspectors that they are set extension tasks that challenge them further. Teaching assistants are used well to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs, so that all students can cope with the challenging tasks set.
- In the best lessons students are fully and actively involved in their learning, but occasionally opportunities are missed to enable students to discuss ideas in pairs or to work as a team to ensure they are all actively involved in their work.
- Students speak warmly of the many ways in which teachers help them, both with their work and in providing pastoral support. One student spoke of the 'selfless' way in which teachers give up their time for the benefit of students, from providing revision classes to giving individual help if they needed it.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students, staff, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school. Students are polite and courteous, both to one another and to visitors, and are excellent ambassadors for the school.
- The school is light, airy and inspiring. It is kept spotlessly clean and in good repair as a result of students' high level of respect for, and their pride in, their environment. It has a warm and harmonious atmosphere where all are made to feel welcome.
- Students' extremely positive attitudes and outstanding behaviour in lessons have a significant impact on their learning. Relationships are warm and supportive, and even when the tasks set do not provide opportunities for active learning, students concentrate well and are keen to contribute.
- Students have a good understanding of the different forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, but say it is extremely rare and any incidents are treated seriously by adults who provide quick support. They say that they trust their teachers but also that, 'Everyone is a friend, so we support each other.'
- Students understand about safe practice and know how to keep themselves and each other safe. Year 7 students, many from small village schools, say that they were not worried about coming to school, and express their confidence in the way older students support them.
- Attendance rates have gradually improved over recent years and are now above average.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has been robust in his efforts to ensure that, at a time of declining funding, the quality of what the school provides should not be compromised. He is well supported by his senior team and the very strong governing body in setting out his priorities for the year, and in

allocating funding to ensure the maximum benefit of all students.

- Staff express their delight in working at the school and their confidence in the leadership's vision to take the school forward. Their comments included 'a fantastic place to be' and 'I love my job!'
- The effective subject leaders in English and science have ensured that achievement continues to rise and that the quality of teaching continues to improve, with members of their department sharing good practice and working as a cohesive team. This is not currently the case in mathematics, where there has not been a similar drive for improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and achievement in this subject has remained only average.
- Performance management procedures are well established and senior staff undertake frequent 'drop-ins' to lessons, enabling them to identify and address teaching that requires improvement. The headteacher has high expectations of all staff but, through his warm and open manner, ensures that their well-being and that of the students are paramount.
- The well-planned curriculum includes courses that are flexible enough to meet students' individual needs and interests. It is enhanced by the specialism in sport, not only providing a wide array of sporting activities from show jumping to gymnastics, but also promoting teamwork, leadership and community involvement.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, and students have a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs. The school provides transport to ensure that students living in the surrounding rural area are not excluded from extra-curricular activities.
- Parents and carers express positive views of the school's work and its leadership and management. Leaders are currently seeking to enhance the information sent to parents and carers using a variety of media.
- The local authority provides suitably 'light-touch' support for this good school, but has identified the need to increase the level of support for mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - has a stated aim that every student achieves his or her best, and provides leaders of the school with the appropriate support and challenge to enable this to happen
  - is well organised to cover every aspect of the school's work and to ensure that available funding is appropriately allocated; this includes ensuring that pupil premium funding is spent to ensure the full inclusion of these students, although governors are aware that the impact of this funding is not monitored sufficiently routinely
  - has taken active steps to seek the views of parents and carers, and ensures that individual governors are frequently available and visible in school to support them
  - ensures that safeguarding procedures and practices meet current requirements.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123578
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	395459

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	536
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Val Simpson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Allan Gilhooley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01299 270312
<b>Fax number</b>	01299 271037
<b>Email address</b>	admin@shropshirelg.net



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