

Ladybridge High School Specialist Sports College

New York, Junction Road, Deane, Bolton, Lancashire, BL3 4NG

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is much improved since its last inspection. Results in English are closer to the national average and those in mathematics are improving.
- From their starting points, students make good progress in their learning during their time at the school.
- The number of students making and exceeding expected progress compares well with national averages, including disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Students feel safe and their behaviour is good, which contributes well to their learning. Relationships between teachers and students are strong.
- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong, inspirational leadership that is well thought of by staff and students. Middle leaders contribute expertly well to driving forward improvements.
- Governors are extremely well-informed and rigorous in their work. They work very closely with the senior leaders and have helped secure much improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching quality has improved markedly and is driving better progress. Work to improve the reading and writing skills of students is having a good impact.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding but there is a small proportion that requires improvement.
- Not enough of the higher-ability students are reaching the standards they should because, in lessons, the work does not always help them to learn quickly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 part-lessons, several jointly with members of the senior leadership team, an assembly, 'learnacy' periods and activities at break and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner and many senior and middle leaders on the school staff.
- Inspectors met with students representing all age groups, including three who attend alternative provision away from the school for two days a week.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to behaviour, students' safety, attendance and school improvement including those relating to how accurately the school views its own performance.
- An analysis of 77 parent responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) was made together with an analysis of the school's own survey results of students, staff and parents undertaken in the previous term.

Inspection team

Peter Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ray Biglin	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector
Mary Liptrot	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ladybridge is smaller than most secondary schools, and the proportion of boys is higher than the average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional financial support through the pupil premium is higher than average.
- Over half of the students are from families who have minority ethnic heritage, which is above the national average. Nearly one third of the students speak English as an additional language, which again is above the national average.
- The proportion of students whose learning needs are supported through school action is above average. Those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below the national average.
- There is an increasing proportion of students who arrive at the school from abroad at various times of the academic year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- The school sends some Year 10 and 11 students to the providers 'Powerwave' and 'Training for Today' for courses such as health and social care, hair and beauty and construction.
- The school holds numerous awards including the Cultural Diversity Award, Investor in People, International School Award and Outstanding Improvement Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - a greater proportion is outstanding and that which is anything less than good is eradicated
 - in lessons, work enables higher-ability students to learn more rapidly so that more of them exceed national expectations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The attainment of most students when they enter the school is well below the national average. The results in GCSE examinations have improved over the last three years and are now close to the national average in English particularly. The combined results of five good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics were just above the national average in 2012. Science is especially strong with an above average proportion securing the higher grades of A and A*.
- Students make good progress overall by the time they leave, including those who arrive at school from abroad at different points throughout the year; they settle in well and are made very welcome. Those who are at an early stage of learning English and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well. It is recognised by the school that the work set in lessons for the higher-ability students needs to help more of them to learn more rapidly. Early indications are that the school's policy on entering some students early for mathematics is having a beneficial effect on them securing higher grades.
- Students who are enrolled on courses in other locations enjoy their studies and are progressing well. All those spoken to feel safe and are happy spending two days each week away from school with other students.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. The school's management is meticulous in monitoring how the carefully targeted additional funding is spent on this group, helping to ensure the best possible outcomes for these students. Students who are eligible for free school meals achieve a significantly better average point score than that of similar students nationally and when compared with other students at the school.
- Those students who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress because of the good teaching they receive and the well-planned and targeted support of other adults.
- The school provides many opportunities for students to read and literacy is promoted in every subject. Good examples of extended writing were seen in mathematics. Standards in reading and writing are broadly average and most students take pride in the presentation of their work.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection because of the relentless drive from leaders and managers. There is some that is outstanding, much of it is good and a small proportion requires improvement. None was judged to be inadequate. Work seen in students' books, the school's own data and the results of joint observations with the school confirm this.
- Teaching is not outstanding because a small proportion requires improvement and in a few lessons the level of challenge provided by some teachers in some subjects is not high enough. This is borne out by the rates of progress of higher-ability students not comparing well enough with the national averages over time. Inspection evidence showed that sometimes higher-ability students are helped too quickly by some teachers which stifles the opportunity for them to work things out for themselves and prevents them from becoming more resilient.
- When teaching is strongest students get on with their work very well and contribute significantly to their own learning. Teachers expect the very best from students and almost always set work that helps them to learn quickly.
- There is a comprehensive policy of providing written feedback to students and some excellent examples of marking work are evident. However, this practice is not consistent across all subjects.
- Teachers know their students well and most plan lessons that enthuse and capture students' attention and interest. In the less successful lessons, strategies to involve lower-ability students are less imaginative and less well thought out, and as a consequence, progress slows and the attention of the students diminishes.

- There is a strong focus on literacy to improve reading and writing across the curriculum. Literacy targets are often set at the beginning of each lesson, so too are targets for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and understanding, which contribute well to the friendly learning atmosphere.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**is good**

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Relationships are very strong and students are anxious to please their teachers and strive to do the best they can in lessons. This was demonstrated by the behaviour in a lower school assembly which was outstanding. Students filed into the hall respectfully, in an orderly fashion and paid close attention to the address by the headteacher. On exit, the same high expectations were met and all left safely and quietly.
- Students enjoy school, they arrive to lessons on time and overall attendance exceeds the national average by some margin.
- New arrivals to the school are made to feel welcome and all speak of feeling safe and secure, including those students attending lessons elsewhere. One student described Ladybridge as 'a big multicultural family where we all get along,' a view endorsed by many others. Students understand the different types of bullying and know the potential dangers when using the Internet, including social networking sites.
- Tasks in lessons allow students to work together productively. Students' attitudes to each other and their teachers are good. They are eager to learn. When the teaching is more mundane a minority of students are less keen to get on with their work.
- The higher expectations of all, driven by leaders and managers, has resulted in a reduction in exclusions, both permanent and fixed-term over the last two years, helped by the stronger relationships between students and adults.

The leadership and management**is outstanding**

- The headteacher leads the school outstandingly well. She expects the very best from staff and students and has done much to improve the school during her tenure. For example, some attainment is in line with and some slightly above national averages from a position of being well below average.
- The school's senior and middle leaders are highly effective in their roles and help ensure that the achievement of students is at least good. Leaders are relentless in striving to increase this even further. Management systems and processes used by all leaders and managers are extremely robust. The school knows itself very well and is constantly seeking ways to improve students' quality of education even further. The local authority considers the school to have improved considerably since the last inspection and provides appropriate support when needed.
- Middle leaders responsible for subject areas report extensively on each class in each year group three times a year. These reports contain detailed written evaluations of students' achievement and identify strategies to be used to get the best from students. These are successful in helping students and staff to perform increasingly well.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is outstanding. There are robust procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, including subject reviews where a department will undergo a thorough investigation of its effectiveness. In addition, students' work is reviewed regularly and lesson observations of various forms frequently undertaken. Best practice is shared at every opportunity. As a result of these well-targeted processes, teaching and learning have improved rapidly.
- The curriculum is well-constructed and offers rich opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The 'learnacy' period of thirty minutes each day supports this development and helps improve literacy. All students are able to follow the English Baccalaureate programme and there is an appropriate balance between vocational and academic subjects on offer. Equal opportunities for staff and students have a high profile in school.

■ A wide range of opportunities is provided for teachers and other adults to undertake to help develop and strengthen their professional aptitude. These needs are identified through accurate assessments and management of their performance. Challenging objectives are set around students' achievement and teachers' pay progression is linked closely to their success. Senior leaders have additional targets to meet based on whole-school priorities and their individual effectiveness.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is outstanding. It holds the school to account extremely well, due in part to the extensive and regular reporting by the headteacher. These reports detail the school's performance in an evaluative way, which is easy to understand and which gives the governing body a clear and honest view of the school. The governing body has a keen understanding of students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors ensure that the performance management of staff is linked to students' progress. No stone is left unturned by the headteacher and her team when reporting to the governing body, which in turn takes a forensic approach to challenging the school on its performance and journey towards becoming outstanding. The governing body monitors the school's budget exceptionally well, including pupil premium funding and has, with the headteacher, returned the school to financial stability from a position of being severely in deficit. Improvements since the last inspection have been secured and the school now demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve further. Statutory duties are met well, including safeguarding procedures at the school and at the premises of the other providers.

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

Unique reference number	134646
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	402790

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	844
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Roach
Headteacher	Hilary D’Arcy
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2009
Telephone number	01204 333355
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