

Langley School, Specialist College for the Performing Arts, Languages and Training

Kineton Green Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7ER

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 make good progress and do well in nearly all subjects. Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.
- Disabled students and those who have statements of special educational needs are exceptionally well supported and achieve well.
- Students supported by the pupil premium are making increasingly good progress.
- Teaching is good, with a growing proportion of outstanding lessons.
- Teaching in the performing arts is a strength, contributing well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding. Attendance is very high, showing students' considerable enjoyment of their time at the school. Students feel safe and show courtesy towards staff, visitors and each other.
- Through its on-site theatre and sports centre, the school has considerable links with the local community and many schools.
- The headteacher and the leadership team are dedicated to improving the school. Senior staff make regular checks on the quality of teaching. Morale among the staff is high.
- Governors know the school very well, giving good challenge and support to senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to make sure that as many students as possible make outstanding progress.
- Students do not always have the opportunity to discuss their learning together in lessons.
- Teachers do not always give students regular feedback to help students improve. Students are not always given time in lessons to respond to teachers' written comments, so that they can improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 42 lessons taught by 40 teachers. Twelve lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made shorter visits to a number of lessons. Students' work was examined during lessons and during a meeting with a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, staff, three members of the governing body and a consultant from the local authority. Inspectors listened to some Year 7 and Year 8 students read.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed in the 200 responses to the on-line Parent View survey, together with two letters received from parents and telephone conversations with three parents.
- The inspection team took into account the views of staff, including those given in 66 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan. Inspectors considered policies, minutes of the governing body and documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors analysed information provided by the school showing students' progress. The school's website was also a comprehensive source of information.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Cooper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Laffey	Additional Inspector
Terence Payne	Additional Inspector
Glen Goddard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Langley School, Specialist College for the Performing Arts, Languages and Training, is an average-sized secondary school for students from Years 7 to 11.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average. The school runs two specialist units on behalf of the local authority for around 40 students with specific learning difficulties or with physical difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding provided by the government) is below average. In this school, the pupil premium provides additional funding for looked-after children and for students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The majority of students are White British, with around one-quarter of students of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students who are at an early stage of learning English is low.
- A small number of students attend vocational courses off site, including at Solihull College and Hazel Oak Special School.
- As a performing arts college, the school led the way in pioneering the National Arts Award and was the first school in the country to receive this award. The school's on-site Dovehouse Theatre hosts local and national productions and performances.
- Langley School converted to academy status in August 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2006, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - give students even more opportunities to learn on their own and with other members of their class
 - provide feedback to students throughout lessons, so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve
 - give students sufficient time in lessons to respond to teachers' written comments in their books, so that students can improve on their work
 - have more opportunities to exchange ideas about teaching so that they learn from each other and further improve their skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students start in Year 7, their levels of attainment are in line with the national average. Students who completed their examinations in 2012 and those currently in Year 11 attained above the national average before joining the school.
- In 2012, the number of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, and those achieving the English Baccalaureate well has risen to well above the national average.
- The proportion of students making good or better progress in mathematics was much higher than nationally in 2012. However, a few higher-ability students did not do quite as well as expected in English. The school is using data from tests to check students' progress more frequently and make sure all students are on track. Information from the school shows that students in Year 10 and Year 11 are close to meeting ambitious targets in English as well as in mathematics.
- Although most students made good or better progress in biology, chemistry and physics and in the core science examination, some students did not do well in additional science. Recognising that some students are better suited to a more work-related approach, the school entered some students for BTEC science instead of GCSE. The external check of students' BTEC work proved that this was an appropriate decision, with much better results predicted in science.
- Some students are entered for mathematics early, with more-able students taking their GCSE at the end of Year 10 and going on to achieve high-quality results in statistics during Year 11. The school has continued to enter some students during Year 11, including two middle-attaining groups whose recent good results have motivated students to improve on their grades.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the good support provided by teachers and other adults in lessons. Students attending the specialist resource base achieve as well as other students in the school with special educational needs.
- A few students were educated away from the school for one or two days each week on a variety of work-related courses. The school checked their attendance and progress regularly. These students gained English, mathematics and other work-related qualifications at school, before continuing to post-16 education. A small number of students who attend work-related courses away from the school site this year are also expected to gain relevant qualifications.
- Pupil premium funding has paid for a range of activities, including extra tuition, 'This Way Up' mentoring, revision guides and breakfast clubs. In English, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium were just over one year behind those who were not. In mathematics, the gap between students eligible for the pupil premium and those who were not reduced from two years behind to one year, with students performing much better than similar students nationally. The gaps are being narrowed even more at Key Stage 3. There were too few looked-after children to comment on their standards without identifying individuals.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is being spent well to improve students' reading and mathematics skills, and electronic books and mathematics computer programmes are helping to motivate students.

Pupils are making rapid progress in reading because of the extra help in small groups.

- In most of the lessons observed, students made at least good progress and in a few lessons, they made outstanding progress because of exceptionally good teaching.

The quality of teaching is good

- There has been a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching so that teaching is now typically good, with a small number of outstanding lessons seen during the inspection.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and plan their lessons well, with interesting and varied activities; this allows most lessons to move at a good pace.
- Students enjoy lessons where teachers give them demanding work which makes them think. In an outstanding Year 10 German lesson, pairs of students practised speaking about sport with great enthusiasm. They helped each other become highly confident in their language skills, while gaining substantial insight into what they needed to know for their speaking examination. Not all lessons were as challenging as this, even where teaching was good.
- Teachers' questioning is often good, especially where teachers ask extra questions to help students develop their thinking further or show how much they know. This happened in an outstanding Year 10 food studies lesson where the teacher's skilful questions checked that students could explain in detail what they had learnt about healthy eating.
- Teachers make sure that students know the specialist words they need for their subject. In science and in design and technology lessons, students used mathematical skills well to make sure their work was accurate.
- In the few lessons requiring improvement, teachers spent too long introducing the lesson or explaining tasks. Although teachers asked questions, students had fewer opportunities to give reasons for their answers. This meant that students had less time to think through their ideas.
- Students know their targets and what they have to do to improve their work, but teachers do not always give students enough feedback in their lessons to help them make even more progress. In students' written work, many teachers write detailed comments, offering clear guidance on what students need to do to improve. However, students are not often given the time to follow up the suggestions made by their teachers. This means that they do not learn as much from their teachers' advice.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. In a Year 10 English lesson, students argued passionately about who was most to blame for Eva Smith's death in 'An Inspector Calls', showing their grasp of the moral issues involved. In an outstanding Year 9 drama lesson, students of all abilities worked exceptionally well in their groups, gaining insight into the Japanese culture of respect towards older people. In their Human Arts lessons taught by a specialist instructor, students who find it difficult to settle at school have time to reflect and develop a greater sense of self-worth.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are very courteous and polite towards staff, other students and visitors to the school. They can be relied upon to behave safely and responsibly when moving around the busy school

site to their lessons and during the lunchtime.

- Students show considerable respect towards each other, working harmoniously with their classmates in lessons. Students were seen helping other students with disabilities who found it harder to move around the site.
- In their lessons, students thrive especially where the work interests them and they are fully involved. Even where teaching is occasionally not as good, students are almost without exception willing to make every effort in their lessons.
- All students who spoke with inspectors said how safe the school is at all times. Students know how to keep themselves safe and are well-informed about the risks involved in using internet and social networking sites.
- Students say that bullying is rare, and their views are backed up by the low number of recorded incidents of bullying at the school. Students have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying and are entirely confident that the school will always take swift action if bullying occurs.
- The number of students not allowed in school for a short period because of poor behaviour has reduced considerably in recent years. Where this occurs, students are given plenty of support to help them settle back quickly into school routines.
- The school has worked single-mindedly to raise attendance. Year 8 students clapped spontaneously after a lively assembly on 'What's the point of coming to school?' and applauded students who had the best attendance of the week. The school's target of 95% attendance was achieved in 2012, with equally high attendance continuing during this year.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has a consistent ambition for all members of the school 'to be the best they can be'. All who responded to the staff questionnaire expressed their pride in being a member of staff at the school: as one respondent explained, 'We work towards promoting the individual, no matter what barriers they face.'
- Students are set challenging targets and their progress towards them is carefully tracked. The strong focus on raising the attainment of any students at risk of underachieving, including students eligible for the pupil premium, has helped to narrow the gaps in attainment between different groups of students.
- School leaders and teachers in charge of areas of the school's work have an accurate view of what the school does well and which aspects need to improve. They check how good lessons are through formal observations and informal visits. Training has helped teachers improve teaching, but they do not always have the opportunity to share ideas about how to make lessons outstanding.
- The school has thorough and consistent systems of performance management, and targets shared across all teachers have already made a difference to students' progress. Teachers are held to account in line with the national standards and are rewarded only where their teaching is consistently good.
- The school has continued its links with the local authority, with the local authority adviser giving

effective challenge and support to the school through regular visits. The school's work with other schools in mathematics, languages and performing arts is greatly valued by the local authority.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The school looks regularly at the different courses it provides to make sure that the qualifications offered match students' skills and abilities. Following some weaker results within science and design and technology, the school offered more vocational courses to students, with resultant improvements in the standard of students' work. The many extra-curricular activities offered, ranging from the early morning orchestra to lunchtime indoor hockey and the after-school cookery club, contribute to students' enjoyment and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Modern language visits, the Africa Day and fundraising for charities at home and abroad have helped to expand students' global understanding.
- The school enjoys good relationships with parents, carers and the community. Parents' and carers' views are regularly sought and acted upon. Most parents have confidence in the school, especially in how well it makes sure that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough and meet all requirements, and there is a high level of care for individual students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide well-informed challenge to the school's leadership. They have played an active role in planning for the school's further improvement through the 'Vision and Values' project, working closely with senior leaders and seeking the views of staff and students.
 - Governors bring a good range of relevant skills to their role. They take part in regular training, including how to interpret results data. This helps them look beneath the headlines to find out how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally, and to ask searching questions about what else needs to be improved.
 - Governors visit the school regularly, going into lessons and meeting with school leaders and staff. As a result, they are well informed about the quality of teaching. They make sure that teachers are only awarded additional pay and promotion where their teaching is good or better.
 - Financial management is very efficient. Governors know how the use of the pupil premium is contributing to the rising standards of students who benefit from this funding.

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	137007
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	412292

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1002
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev. Peter Bates
Headteacher	Philip Talbot
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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