

Lakers School

Five Acres, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 7QW

Inspection dates 3–4 October 2013

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Require improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Require improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement because too many students are not making consistently good progress; this is particularly the case when the pace of learning is slow.
- The percentage of students making expected progress in English, while improving, is below average, and not as good as in mathematics and science.
- Teaching requires improvement. Despite some strengths, it has not been consistently good enough to sustain good progress for students, particularly in English.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons to take account of different students' individual needs or make high enough demands of different groups of learners, particularly boys.
- Teachers sometimes do not use questioning to check students' understanding or to extend their learning.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to practise reading, writing and communication skills across different subjects.
- The quality and consistency of marking are variable. Some teachers do not mark students' work often enough, give students guidance on how to improve, or check that they have acted on advice.
- Students' attitudes to learning reflect the quality of teaching in lessons. When teaching is weaker, students are not always fully involved with their learning.
- Leaders and governors do not ensure that all staff apply school policies consistently and that the good practice seen in some lessons is shared across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Adults who work with teachers in lessons are well used to provide good support for individuals and small groups of students.
- Students value the caring community atmosphere of the school, feel safe and show respect for adults and one another.
- Strong partnerships with local colleges enable students to access a wide variety of courses.
- Staff morale is high; there is a strong team spirit and they are determined to make further improvements for the benefit of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior staff. A number other lessons were visited briefly to look at students' attitudes to learning. Inspectors examined students' books, talked to students about their work, and heard students read in lessons.
- Inspectors observed other aspects of the school day, including tutor time, students' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and students' arrival and departure from school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a cross-section of other staff, and three groups of students. Four representatives from the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, and a representative from the local authority were also interviewed
- Inspectors took account of the views of 58 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, a phone call from a parent, and 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a wide range of documents, including: the school's own data on students' recent examinations and current progress; its self-evaluation and development plan, information on the work of staff, training arrangements for teachers and other staff; checks on teaching, students' behaviour and attendance; responses to concerns raised by a parent; the safeguarding of students; and details of governance.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie Miriam

Additional Inspector

Steve Nelson

Additional Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lakers School is a smaller-than-average secondary school. Numbers have fallen since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of a cooperative trust with local primary schools and became federated with Berry Hill Primary School in September 2013.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. Few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Seventy-five students at Key Stage 4 receive part of their education away from the school site. They follow vocational courses provided by GlosCol College and Hartpury College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement, especially in English, through teaching that is always good or better by ensuring that:
 - all lessons are demanding and well paced so that all students, particularly boys, are able to maintain good levels of concentration and involvement in their learning
 - questioning checks all students' understanding and involvement during lessons, and is used to challenge and develop their thinking skills to accelerate their learning and progress
 - work is marked to a consistently high standard in every subject, giving students clear guidance on how to improve, and allowing them time to discuss and reflect on the advice given
 - students are given more opportunities to develop and use the skills they need to write, read and communicate accurately in all subjects.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - best practice is shared amongst staff so that they have a clear understanding of what good and outstanding teaching looks like
 - school policies are applied consistently by all staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too many students are not making consistently good progress, particularly in English, where it is still below average.
- In 2012, students eligible for pupil premium attained approximately a grade lower in English, and a grade lower in mathematics when compared to other students in the school. They were approximately one third of a grade lower in English and mathematics when compared to similar students across the country. Unvalidated results for 2013 examinations and data for current students show that this gap is starting to close.
- Boys are performing less well than girls, particularly in English. In 2012 the average grade for a boy in English was half a grade lower than that for a girl, and a quarter of a grade lower in mathematics. Current school data shows that this gap is narrowing.
- Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved and information on the progress of students currently in school shows that these improvements are set to continue.
- The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE A*–C grades, including English and mathematics, improved significantly in 2012. There is a dip in 2013 unvalidated results but the percentage is still significantly higher than that of 2011 and shows an upward trend.
- Results in GCSE mathematics have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The proportion of students making expected progress is better than that of students nationally.
- Until this year, some students have been entered for GCSE English at the end of Year 10 so that they could concentrate on English literature in Year 11. However, the school has decided that this has limited some students from reaching higher grades and in future all students will spend two years studying for their English GCSE.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, those eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme, and those who speak English as an additional language all benefit from additional help and guidance. Their progress is checked regularly and extra support is given when it is needed. As a result, these students make similar progress to their peers.
- The attendance, behaviour and progress of those students who are taught off the school site are monitored effectively so that these students make at least similar progress to their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to lead to good progress overall for students. There is still some teaching which requires improvement or which is occasionally inadequate.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not plan activities which meet all students' needs. In some lessons there is a lack of pace to learning, students are not challenged to think and exchange ideas, and questioning is aimed at the whole class rather than used to check individual and different groups of students' understanding and involvement in their learning.
- Marking is variable. In the best marking, teachers identify what students need to do to improve their work, allow students time to reflect on the feedback, and provide opportunities for students to respond to advice. However, this is not consistent across subjects.
- The school has a policy to promote literacy skills across all subjects, and in the best lessons teachers focus on providing activities that allow students to practise their speaking and listening skills and produce extended writing about topics within their areas. However, this is not consistent across subjects.
- Where teaching is most successful, students are given demanding work, are fully involved in their own learning and are well aware of what they need to do to improve. For example, in an

outstanding Year 7 mathematics lesson dealing with multiplication, the teacher had used detailed assessment data to plan a variety of activities for different abilities within the class. Groups of students were enthusiastically working with the teacher and two teaching assistants, discussing work, sharing ideas, assessing their own work and that of others, responding well to challenging questioning, and as a result making outstanding progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because there are too many lessons where some students are content to sit back and let others do the work or answer questions. This is generally where teaching activities do not fully meet all students' needs and where there is a lack of pace and challenge. A few students reported inconsistencies in the staff's management of unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils are well behaved around the school. Students say they enjoy attending the school and feel safe. They say that teachers care for them and teach them well. They value the opportunities and activities provided for them.
- Behaviour in lessons is mostly good and students' attitudes to learning are generally positive, particularly in lessons where teaching is good or better.
- Students are aware of the different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying. They told inspectors that on the rare occasions that it does occur it is mostly dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Most of the parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire felt that students were well behaved and cared for, and that the school dealt with bullying effectively.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. The school has been active in raising attendance and continues to tackle persistent absence so that this is reducing. The number of exclusions is falling.
- Students' attendance at courses organised off-site is good. The school keeps a careful check on their attendance and liaises well with providers of these courses to ensure students enjoy and benefit from the education they receive.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the overall evaluation of teaching does not always take into account the effect that teaching has on students' progress over time, nor are checks always rigorous enough to ensure that school policies, such as the marking and literacy policies, are applied consistently by all staff.
- School self-evaluation shows that senior leaders are aware of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. Their focus on improving teaching is accurate and they have put systems in place to achieve this. However, teaching is not improving at a fast enough rate and further work needs to be done to share the good practice that exists already across the school.
- Checks on the quality of teaching in lessons are frequent, and joint observations with members of the senior leadership team confirmed the accuracy of their judgements.
- Senior staff meet regularly with teachers and middle leaders to discuss progress towards meeting performance management annual objectives. Training is closely linked to ways to support staff to meet their targets. Any underperformance is dealt with quickly and no members of staff are given salary increases unless their performance over time warrants them.
- Throughout the year staff take part in training to meet their specific needs. There is a focus on coaching staff and providing them with good opportunities to shadow staff with posts of responsibility to widen their experiences and prepare them for next steps in their careers.
- Staff morale is high. The response to the staff questionnaires was overwhelmingly positive about

the school and the drive for improvement. One member of the support staff wrote, 'I am very proud of Lakers staff and students. I enjoy being part of this school.' A member of the teaching staff wrote, 'I love teaching at Lakers. It is a truly supportive environment for students, staff and parents alike.'

- The curriculum is well adapted to meet the range of students' needs. The school has close relationships with two local colleges to provide vocational and work-related courses for students in Key Stage 4. In addition, it offers a wide range of opportunities and experiences in assemblies, lessons and tutor time. A variety of clubs and activities beyond the school day also contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.
- Additional funding received through the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up programme is used sensibly to make sure that students get the help that they need. The school works hard to prevent discrimination and make sure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The school enjoys positive relationships with most parents and carers, and with different groups within the local community. It benefits from effective links with other agencies, schools and local businesses. There is a light-touch working relationship between the school and the local authority.
- Arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements, including risk assessments for students who are educated away from the school site.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is newly formed as part of the federation of Lakers School and Berry Hill Primary School. Governors are committed to providing the best education for students, and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They have an impressive range of skills through the training that they have received, through their experience on the different governing bodies, and through their own experience in education and business. They are well informed about how the school is performing compared to schools nationally, and about the quality of teaching and learning. They ensure there are close links between performance management and salary awards, with the effectiveness of teaching and students' achievement. They monitor expenditure closely and are keen to ensure that resources are used effectively to benefit students, including those for pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 115774 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 426792 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 606 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Paul Duggan |
| Headteacher | Alison Elliott |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9–10 November 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01594 832263 |
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