

Lea Manor High School Performing Arts College

Northwell Drive, Luton, LU3 3TL

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013 and 21 March 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and achieve well. This is because teaching, typically, is good, and teachers are ever-alert to any individual who is falling behind.
- Students' attainment and progress in mathematics is consistently strong.
- The school gives good support to disabled students and those with special educational needs. They are catching up with the standards reached by other groups of students.
- Students enjoy their lessons. Their positive attitudes to learning are a key factor in their good achievement.
- The headteacher's ambitious vision for the school is clearly communicated so that the collective efforts of staff and students are sharply and constructively focused.
- School leaders know what the school is doing well and are quick to identify areas for improvement. Their actions are improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Students are friendly, considerate and supportive of one another. They say they feel safe in the school.
- Governors support the school well, but also challenge school leaders to make the school even better.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is variability in the quality of students' learning and progress in some subjects such as science.
- A few students struggle to willingly engage with school. Although the school works well with most families, the most hard-to-reach students do not yet attend regularly enough or achieve well enough.
- In some lessons, the work set for students does not closely match their ability levels, and is sometimes too easy.
- Teachers do not ensure that students act on the advice given in marking by making improvements to their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, some of which were jointly observed with a senior leader. Inspectors also observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Inspectors conducted a learning walk to look at the effectiveness of additional adults in a range of lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, a group of less experienced teachers, a group of governors, three groups of students and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke with governors on the telephone.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; records of teachers' performance; the analysis of students' progress; students' work; and records relating to the behaviour and safety of students.
- Inspectors looked at the 23 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of responses to an inspection questionnaire from 82 staff.
- Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors made a further visit to the school on 21 March in order to complete the inspection.

Inspection team

Neil Stanley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ann Short	Additional Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
Paul Brooker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christopher Moodie	Her majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lea Manor High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has specialist status in performing arts.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.
- A large proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well above average. This additional funding is for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care, or with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- Alongside their GCSE subjects, a very small number of students attend courses at a range of different providers, including ACE, Active Support, Angling for Success, Apollo, Burnell Training, Eastern Training, First Place, KWS, On Track and Seeds for Change.
- The school runs a specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs. This specialist unit caters for up to eight students who have autism and social communication difficulties.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding to accelerate students' progress by making sure that:
 - lessons are planned with activities that stretch and challenge students with different abilities
 - students follow the advice they are given when teachers mark their books.
- Hone and extend the strategies that successfully engage the most hard-to-reach students so that levels of persistent absenteeism are reduced further, and all students are well prepared for life after school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with standards that are often well below those seen nationally. Despite these low starting points, they make good progress and achieve well. Results in mathematics are particularly impressive.
- In 2012, the proportion of students gaining at least five A*-C grade GCSEs (including English and mathematics) exceeded the national average for the first time, but a dip in English results took the school below the national headline figure in 2013. Students' progress and achievement in English were broadly in line with that expected, rather than above average, as was the case in 2012.
- Achievement in mathematics is unequivocally good because student attainment rises from 'below average' at Key Stage 2 to 'above average' by the end of Key Stage 4. Inspection evidence, from observations of teaching, scrutiny of students' work and analysis of school assessment information, confirms that students across all year groups also make good progress in English.
- Students achieve well in English and mathematics because teaching in these core subjects is particularly strong. Good achievement here is underpinned by the school's rigorous and systematic assessment. The progress of each student, and each and every group, is carefully tracked so that potential underperformance is quickly identified and swiftly tackled.
- Despite disappointing GCSE drama results in 2013, achievement in the school's specialist performing arts is a notable strength.
- The school's more-able students generally do well across all subjects, including English and mathematics. They benefit from a range of additional activities to challenge and extend them. In 2013, they performed particularly well in science, where the number of students achieving GCSE grades A* and A increased.
- The school closely checks the progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs. As a result of extra help that is matched well to their learning needs, these students, including those in the specialist unit who have autism and social communication difficulties, make accelerated progress so that the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates is closing.
- Students who are eligible for support from the pupil premium do well, but the picture is complex. In 2013, eligible students in Year 11 were, on average, one GCSE grade behind their classmates in English and mathematics. Most eligible students make progress that is at least as good as their peers and often better, so there is little or no difference in their attainment, and any gaps in performance are closing. However, the engagement and achievement of the most hard-to-reach individuals remains an ongoing challenge.
- Students from different ethnic groups make similar progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Those for whom English is an additional language make rapid progress as a result of the extra help they are given.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to provide a scheme to encourage wider reading. School data show this is having a positive impact on students' reading abilities. In some cases the resulting improvements in students' reading are dramatic.

- The very small numbers of students who attend work-related and other courses at a wide range of other providers make good progress. This is because school leaders have made sure that they are following subjects that match their ability levels and interests.
- Although the school has made use of early GCSE entry in the past, students are not being entered early for GCSEs this year.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is usually good and sometimes outstanding. Senior and middle leaders know where teaching is not yet good enough and precisely which aspects need strengthening.
- Lessons start briskly and enjoy a positive climate for learning. Teachers encourage students to get involved and think for themselves. For example, in a mathematics lesson on line graphs, students looked at their own work and corrected their mistakes, to reach the correct answers.
- Teachers often use probing questions in lessons to check students' understanding. This was seen in an English lesson on poetry, where the teacher questioned students skilfully to help them analyse the effect of the writer's word choices. As a result, all students made rapid progress.
- Teachers make good use of opportunities to improve students' literacy skills. In a Year 8 drama lesson, students were encouraged to apply technical vocabulary as they spoke about each other's performances.
- Marking is often detailed and thorough, particularly in languages and humanities lessons. However, teachers do not always make sure that students act on their comments by following up the guidance given to improve the quality of their work.
- Students work well together. For example, in a Year 11 Spanish lesson, they helped each other improve their grammar and produce extended writing.
- Classrooms are often vibrant and stimulating environments; for example, the music and drama rooms. This helps students become interested in the lessons.
- Teachers set regular homework. This helps students work on their own to build on what they have learnt in class, and they make good progress as a result.
- Good support is given to disabled students and those who have special educational needs. This is why these students are achieving well. However, additional adults are sometimes not used effectively in class to accelerate the progress of these students.
- Teachers generally plan lessons with an awareness of students' different learning needs. However, work is not always pitched at the right level and activities set are sometimes too easy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Around the school students behave consistently well, moving quickly and calmly to lessons. Some wider community facilities, including the local library, are

based on the school site, and here, as elsewhere, students show consideration and respect for others.

- This is a friendly school. Through the positive relationships that the school has built over time, students help each other to improve. They listen attentively to their teachers and their classmates and respect each other's opinions. Because of this, students confidently share their answers in class and give each other encouragement to try again if they are get things wrong.
- The school is very clear about the boundaries for behaviour and safety and takes a tough stance where necessary. Recently, for example, levels of exclusion have increased as part of a deliberate policy to eradicate lower levels of misbehaviour.
- Students behave consistently well in class. They enjoy their lessons and find the work interesting. They participate with enthusiasm in discussions, asking as well as answering questions. In group activities, students work positively with all their classmates, not just their friends.
- As Year 11 prefects and Key Stage 3 'School Champions', students are encouraged to take leadership and responsibility. Students even have a role in formally assessing their learning and how lessons can be improved. Many after-school clubs are run by Year 11 students, who also lead sessions that develop younger students' personal and social skills.
- Students are keen to talk to visitors to the school. In their discussions with inspectors, they were confident and friendly, and they showed a pride in their school and its community.
- Students say bullying is very rare in school. They have a very good awareness of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racism, sex and gender bullying, and other types of harassment. In a Year 9 lesson, students were observed thoughtfully discussing the effect of bullying. Students say they are confident that teachers would take any bullying seriously, and deal with it effectively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe in the school and they know how to keep safe in different situations, including when using the internet.
- Students' attendance has improved in recent years and is now close to the national average. This is due to the school's partnership with parents. Instances of persistent absence have fallen, but remain above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership, and communicates an ambitious vision for the school. Her unambiguous expectations have already impacted on the quality of teaching and learning, and further raised standards of behaviour.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities and have clear plans to make sure those improvements are sustained. Their judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are accurate and consistent. In jointly observed lessons, senior leaders' judgements matched those of inspectors.
- The performance of staff is well managed. Leaders take a fair approach to awarding pay rises for staff that is linked appropriately to students' achievement. Staff who are new to teaching say

they are well supported.

- The school works hard to engage all students by providing a wide range of enrichment opportunities, particularly through its performing arts specialism, to widen involvement and enrich students' experiences. The accomplishments of individual students and teams are displayed around the school, for example in photographs or friezes of students' work, so that the environment positively celebrates and reinforces high achievement in all its forms.
- The curriculum meets students' differing needs. The 'opening minds' curriculum in Key Stage 3 helps students make good use of their English and mathematical skills in other subjects. The performing arts specialism has been used to develop positive relationships between students and make them more confident individuals.
- Leaders provide many opportunities that promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular, they emphasise the school's place within its local community, supporting local charities and hosting an annual Christmas lunch for local senior citizens. Students' cultural development has been promoted through both an artist and a poet in residence.
- Leaders have worked effectively to build trust with parents, especially those who find it difficult working with schools. Through the regular 'parent voice' meetings, they have been able to influence policies on uniform, catering and road safety and to make the school's website more helpful.
- The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- The school ensures that all students receive independent advice to help them prepare for their next steps in education, training and employment.
- The school is well supported by the local authority, which has provided advice on the pay and performance policy, and support for subject leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors come from a wide range of backgrounds and experience. However, they all share a drive to make sure that the school keeps on improving. In their discussions, they challenge the school's leaders, and each other, to make the right decisions.
 - Governors have an accurate understanding about what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. They ask leaders probing questions to get information about the quality of teaching and students' achievement, but also take part in learning walks and student interviews to find out for themselves. Governors monitor closely the progress of different groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium and they make sure that additional government funding is spent wisely.
 - Governors are ambitious for the school. When appointing the new headteacher, they thought carefully about how the school needs to develop.
 - Through rigorous planning and prudent budgeting, governors are checking that school leaders ensure the school's financial stability. They have a good oversight of teachers' pay and promotion, ensuring that decisions are justified by evidence of students' progress.

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	109709
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	429541

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	1070
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lincoln James
Headteacher	Amanda Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2011
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