

# Lyme Vale School

Unit 2, Lyme Vale Court, Parklands, Newcastle under Lyme, ST4 6NW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–25 September 2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<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

### This is a good school

- Students' achievement is good. They make good or better progress, including in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is always at least good with some that is outstanding.
- The small classes are effective in helping students achieve well. The strong relationships fostered by the staff encourage outstanding behaviour.
- Students are safe here and state that this is the case. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are prepared well for moving on to the next stage of their education.
- The good leadership, management and governance by the proprietor has ensured that teaching is good and improving, as are all other aspects of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not always make as much progress in lessons as they should because tasks are occasionally not well matched to their various levels of ability.
- The pace of learning drops when students share equipment during activities. Teachers' marking is not always effective in helping students to improve.
- The proprietor has not yet ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently outstanding.
- The regulations for the curriculum are met but students have infrequent lessons in practical technology and make too little progress in this area of learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspector observed three lessons, taught by three teachers and an assembly that was treated as a lesson. He made six shorter visits to lessons to look at students' work and their conduct in classes.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor who is the headteacher. Discussions were held with senior staff, teachers and students outside of lesson times.
- The inspector scrutinised teachers' plans, school policies and other important documents.
- The views of staff and parents were taken into account

## Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Lyme Vale School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. The school is located in Newcastle under Lyme. It opened in May 2013 and is closely associated with a tutorial service operated by the proprietor from the same premises.
- The school is registered for up to 20 students and provides full time education for all who are on the roll. No student has a statement of special educational needs and none is identified as requiring additional help with their studies.
- Currently, all students are of Asian heritage with the majority from families that originate in Pakistan. A few are of Indian origin. Some have arrived in this country very recently. All speak English as if it is their first language.
- Lyme Vale aims 'to inspire your child to achieve academic success'. The emphasis is for all students to gain the best possible GCSE examination grades.
- This is the first time the school has been inspected.

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

- Teachers must ensure that students make the best possible progress by:
  - accurately matching tasks to students' levels of ability
  - reducing the need for students to take turns and share equipment during activities
  - using marking more effectively to help students understand how to improve their work.
- Leadership and management must improve through:
  - using more rigorous management of staff performance to raise the quality of teaching to outstanding
  - ensuring that practical technology lessons are provided on a more regular basis for all students.

## Inspection judgements

### Achievement of pupils

#### Good

- The great majority of students enter the school with standards of attainment in line with, or above, those of their peers nationally. The school is only in its second year of operation and last year there were no Year 11 students to take GCSE examinations. Consequently, the school does not yet have any record of examination success. However, the achievement of students in their learning is always at least good with some that is outstanding.
- The main focus of learning for students at Key Stage 3 is on English and mathematics. Other subjects such as science, French and information and communication technology also have a high priority. In all lessons, these students make progress at least in accordance with the expectations for their age and stage of development. Sometimes they greatly exceed expectations.
- All students seen during the inspection read widely and competently in lessons. This enables them to choose their words with care when learning. For example, in GCSE science lessons observed they read about and then used technical language accurately to describe genetic processes. In a Key Stage 4 mathematics lesson students accurately applied a variety of terms to explain how they solved equations using information supplied by the teacher.
- Students tackle tasks willingly and with great enthusiasm. Mostly, their behaviour has an outstanding impact on their learning. However, the pace of learning slows noticeably when they wait and take turns with equipment in some lessons.
- Occasionally, activities lack challenge and students simply repeat similar tasks without extending their learning. Similarly, learning slows when, for some students, activities are occasionally too demanding and they rely on the support of others in the class.
- All students take great pride in their work. The presentation of their workbooks is of extremely high quality and shows accuracy in the use of written language to express ideas. Their mathematics books are well ordered and it can quickly be seen if work has not been completed or mistakes made in calculations.
- Generally, teachers ensure that basic errors of calculation, punctuation or spelling are corrected quickly. However, they do not, in their marking, encourage students sufficiently to provide more evidence of independent thinking.
- Accurate school records indicate that students make good progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and other subjects. All are carefully tracked to ensure the courses they study for GCSE are appropriate to their needs. Regular advice is given to students about careers. This helps them know what their options will be when they leave school and motivates them to succeed in their examinations.

### Quality of teaching

#### Good

- The good quality of teaching ensures that all groups of students make good progress in almost all areas of study. Some teaching is outstanding and, when it occurs, teachers have very high expectations of students. They check regularly that each member of the class has a clear understanding of any new learning. Consequently, students make very rapid progress.
- The good leadership of English and mathematics ensures that students receive consistently good teaching in these subjects. Teachers of all subjects are required to encourage students to attend to the basic skills of presentation, punctuation and spelling.
- The staff foster excellent relationships with students, aided by the very small class groups. These relationships encourage students to learn and make progress in class. They also make rapid gains in their personal development.
- Teachers act as mentors to their students. They encourage them to express their ideas and experiment with different ways of thinking without any fear of criticism. As a result, students

develop good reasoning skills and good use of spoken language.

- Occasionally, the tasks undertaken by students in lessons are too easy and therefore provide insufficient challenge for them. Similarly, for other students, too little account is sometimes taken of their slower pace of learning and they find the activities too difficult to complete; they then rely on the assistance of a classmate.
- Teachers provide great encouragement for students through providing interesting and engaging activities. They explain things well and students rapidly gain understanding of the main points of the learning.
- Mostly, the staff are subject specialists and their knowledge lends confidence to their work. For example, when students are struggling with difficult concepts, teachers draw on their expertise to use a variety of explanations to help students succeed.
- Throughout the school, skilful questioning helps teachers know how well students are gaining the important knowledge, skills and understanding they need to succeed. The oral feedback provided by teachers is usually of a high quality. It encourages some students to think deeply about their new learning.
- All teachers keep records of students' learning including the details of how they progress through GCSE courses. The information gained about the way students learn is generally used to plan the next steps of work for classes and groups.
- The marking of students' work by teachers often provides little help on how they might improve, and sometimes, the demands made by teachers in their marking are not followed through.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

## Outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. In classes, their attitudes to learning are excellent and they show exceptional levels of concentration. Students cooperate extremely well in classes, often helping each other out when they become unable to solve a problem or complete a task. The relationships here are very strong.
- Students say that bullying and harassment are unknown and that they feel very safe indeed. School records indicate that serious incidents and exclusions do not occur.
- The school's work to keep students safe is outstanding. All of the requirements for safeguarding are met including through the provision of training for staff in child protection, first aid and health and safety. Safe recruitment of personnel is demonstrated by the proprietor's rigorous attention to statutory requirements.
- All the requirements for routine checks on fire safety are implemented systematically. During the inspection a fire evacuation was witnessed and this was undertaken smoothly and efficiently by all.
- For all students, the rate of attendance is very high and absences are rare. Students report that they enjoy coming to school and appreciate the relationships they have with each other and with the staff. When questioned by the inspector some said they occasionally miss the larger community of a mainstream school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Teachers encourage students to discuss issues of right and wrong during lessons. School assemblies are carefully planned to help them learn about the public institutions and services of England. For example, during the inspection an assembly covered the theme of 'democracy'. Students and staff discussed recent issues of British government such as the Scottish referendum. Students were animated by the subject matter, and one said afterwards to the member of staff concerned: 'we should do more of this!'.
- Through personal, social, health education and citizenship they learn about keeping themselves safe and about wider society. Regular trips out of school to places of interest, worship and public institutions are undertaken such as to a nearby cathedral, the ambulance station and to the Cheltenham Book Festival. These aspects of off-site education encourage students to be aware of spiritual and cultural issues. The off-site education ensures students

come into contact with people from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds and helps them to value and respect those with different heritage and belief.

- During their time at the school, and by being members of small class groups, students have every opportunity to increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is demonstrated by their willingness to test their ideas in class discussions and to join in with question and answer sessions. In these ways the school helps prepare students for moving on to the next stages of their education.
- The proprietor makes it clear to staff and students that consideration of any political and religious views must be approached in a balanced and non-partisan manner.

## Leadership and management

**Good**

- The leadership, management and governance of the school by the proprietor are good, ensuring that a good quality of education is maintained. Since the registration of the school the proprietor has ensured that all regulations have been met and compliance maintained. The feedback from parents and staff indicates that the school has improved throughout the last year.
- Leaders and managers do not have the benefit of further independent review and support from someone not closely associated with the daily running of the school.
- Some aspects of leadership and management are outstanding such as the encouragement of students to demonstrate outstanding behaviour, excellent attitudes to learning and high standards of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The proprietor has ensured all of the requirements for the welfare, health and safety of students and staff are in place through the maintenance and implementation of good policies and procedures. All students and staff know who the designated person for safeguarding is. To protect students further the proprietor has required the safeguarding officer to undertake some additional training with the local authority above the statutory requirements and in line with the latest government guidance.
- The dual use of the school as a tutorial service for external students has been carefully considered. The safeguarding of school students is upheld through rigorous supervision and separation of the different student groups.
- The management of staff performance has not yet been fully effective in ensuring that teaching is consistently outstanding. Nevertheless, the evidence gained to date through staff appraisal has been used to reward some teachers.
- High morale among staff is evident and they are determined to ensure that students receive the best service from them. They work very closely together.
- All of the regulations concerning the provision of educational activities are met and the school generally offers an appropriate range of subjects for all ages. However, technological education occurs irregularly. Consequently, students do not benefit as much as they should from practical activities such as food technology or the study of resistant materials.
- Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress at school through the distribution each term of formal school reports. A comprehensive school prospectus carries all of the required information for parents and prospective parents about the education offered and the running of the school.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate
<p>Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the <i>Non-association independent school inspection handbook</i> which is published on the Ofsted website: <a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053">www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053</a>.</p>	

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139726
<b>Inspection number</b>	443004
<b>DfE registration number</b>	861/6009

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent day school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	14
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Abdul Rahim
<b>Chair</b>	N/a
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Abdul Rahim
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£3000 to £5000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 619065
<b>Fax number</b>	N/a
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