

Lakers School

Five Acres, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 7QW

Inspection dates

8–9 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Inadequate |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Inadequate |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Inadequate |
| Outcomes for pupils | Inadequate |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils’ achievement is inadequate and has been for some time. Their progress is too slow and too few leave the school with five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are poor and the gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally are widening.
- Too often teaching fails to challenge or inspire pupils. Teachers’ expectations of what pupils can achieve are frequently too low and this slows their progress.
- The feedback that teachers give to pupils about their work is inadequate. Marking does not help pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers’ questioning does not effectively assess or deepen pupils’ understanding.
- Relationships between the school’s senior leaders and the governors have broken down. They do not work effectively together and this has a very negative impact on the running of the school.
- School leaders do not spend all of the extra money provided by the government for disadvantaged pupils. No coherent plan exists for the use of this money. Middle leaders’ areas of responsibility and lines of accountability are not clear.
- There is too much disruption in classrooms. Too many pupils do not consistently show positive attitudes to their learning.
- Actions taken to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been ineffective. As a result, the quality of education the school provides has declined.

The school has the following strengths

- The school provides good careers information, advice and guidance for pupils. The pupils recognise this and talk very positively about it.
- The school makes effective use of its teaching assistants, who work well with individual pupils and with groups.
- The school cares for, nurtures and looks after its pupils well.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Some younger pupils are making good progress in their reading.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make faster progress from their individual starting points by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for pupils of all abilities
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning so that it more effectively develops pupils' ability to think deeply about what they are learning
 - ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of pupils' work and behaviour in all lessons
 - improving the quality of the feedback teachers give pupils on their work so that it always enables them to make rapid progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments so that the school's systems for tracking pupils' performance provide more secure evidence of their progress.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that school leaders and governors work together more effectively to tackle the school's history of low attainment and poor progress
 - spending the extra funding provided by the government for disadvantaged pupils in an efficient and timely manner so that the gaps between their outcomes and those of other pupils nationally close significantly
 - clarifying the roles of those middle leaders responsible for pupils' progress so that lines of accountability are clear
 - improving the school's training for teachers so that the quality of teaching improves quickly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- School leaders have been unable to halt the rapid decline in pupils' outcomes over the last few years. They have no clear explanation as to why recent results fell so short of their own expectations. Leaders' assessments of the quality of teaching in the school are too generous, especially given the very poor outcomes for pupils that are a result of this teaching. Moreover, they have not created a culture of high expectations of achievement and behaviour in the classroom. This, too, has contributed to pupils' inadequate progress.
- Progress in relation to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection has been too slow. For example, the level of demand teachers make of pupils, the quality of their questioning and the impact of their marking were all areas for improvement two years ago. However, all remain areas of serious concern. School leaders know this but they have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure rapid improvement. For example, despite recent training, teachers' questioning is still often poor.
- School leaders' use of the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils, the pupil premium, is inadequate. They did not spend all of it last year and are projecting that they will not use all of it this year. They do not check effectively the impact of those funds that are spent. The overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not routinely monitored. Given that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are so poor, these weaknesses amount to serious shortcomings in the leadership and management of the school.
- The responsibilities of senior and middle leaders lack clarity and a clear rationale. As a result, areas of responsibility are blurred and lines of accountability are unclear. This lack of focus is an obstacle to an unwavering drive to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The school's systems for tracking pupils' performance are inaccurate and this has led to significant over-optimism on the school's part about the outcomes that pupils will achieve. School leaders are now aware of this and are attempting to tackle it but it is too early to tell whether their actions will be successful.
- Leaders at all levels are too quick to explain underachievement by pointing to the low aspirations they say are evident in the community they serve. This unquestioning attitude leads to unacceptably low expectations of what pupils can achieve and is a major barrier to improving outcomes for pupils.
- The school has received some support from the local authority but this has not been effective in preventing the rapid decline in academic standards.
- School leaders accept that the curriculum is not appropriate as it does not sufficiently meet the learning needs of all pupils. Leaders do not have a clear strategic vision for the development of the curriculum in the future. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities such as sport, music, and a branch of the combined cadet force.
- School leaders do not promote equality of opportunity effectively because of their low expectations of pupils and groups of pupils.
- The school successfully promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In tutor time and other settings, pupils discussed potentially controversial topics with some maturity. In discussions with inspectors, they displayed a tolerance for others who have different lifestyles or beliefs and a respect for their values.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The relationship between the governing body and the school's senior leadership has broken down and it is accepted by both that the relationship is dysfunctional. Disagreements between governors and senior leaders over the future direction of the school and the federation of which it is a part have been a significant drain on the time and energies of all concerned. As a consequence, the school has lacked strategic direction and has declined.
 - Governors have not been able to stop the decline in outcomes for pupils by holding the school's leaders to account. Only recently have they begun to provide the necessary level of robust challenge to leaders on this decline.
 - The governing body has not overseen the school's use of the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils well enough or, indeed, ensured that it is all spent. These pupils are entitled to expect that the school uses this money effectively and efficiently.
 - Governors do not have a clear understanding about the relationships between management of teachers' performance, outcomes for pupils and teachers' pay awards.

- Recent changes to the composition of the governing body, including the addition of a national leader of governance and an experienced trainer of governors, have strengthened the governing body but the changes are too recent to have had any impact.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff have received the required training in safeguarding and child protection and this is updated regularly. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, feel that pupils are safe and well looked after at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a consequence, the level of challenge that they present to pupils is insufficient to ensure that they make good progress. When presented with inspiring and engaging teaching with the right degree of challenge, pupils rise to the occasion. Too often, however, this does not happen and pupils consequently do not achieve well.
- Teachers do not plan lessons with sufficient attention to the differing abilities of pupils. In particular, inspectors saw little evidence of teachers adapting their teaching to meet the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through the pupil premium.
- Lessons are sometimes slow to start and valuable learning time is lost. This is also the case at the end of some lessons. This inefficient use of time means there are too many lost opportunities for learning over the year which consequently impairs pupils' progress.
- Teachers' marking is not effective enough in helping pupils make progress. It often lacks precise guidance for pupils about what they are doing well and how they can improve their work. There is an over-reliance on pupils' marking their own and others' work, often with little or no input from teachers. This means pupils are getting insufficient help from teachers to help them improve their learning.
- Teachers do not use questioning successfully to assess pupils' current understanding or to deepen their thinking. As a result, their assessment of pupils' attainment is not always accurate.
- Weaknesses related to levels of challenge, marking and questioning were highlighted during the previous inspection but serious inadequacies in all of these aspects of teaching remain.
- Teaching assistants were observed working well with pupils in, for example, science and music. They work effectively with individual pupils and with whole classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are often not positive enough. Many pupils do not demonstrate a willingness to push themselves hard to achieve well. These attitudes are the result of the weak teaching that pupils have received over time and are reinforced by the low expectations of them that teachers often have. Inspectors observed occasions where pupils, having finished the work set, were quite content to sit back rather than seek further work. Inspectors also noted that pupils often lose interest in the face of uninspiring teaching.
- The school works well to promote the physical and emotional well-being of pupils. In discussion, pupils could describe clearly how this had been done. They have a secure knowledge of how to stay safe and who to turn to if they need help. They say there is little bullying and, if it does occur, the school handles it well. Pupils know how to stay safe online.
- The quality of careers education, information and guidance is strong. This is highly valued by pupils and clearly contributes to the fact that in recent years the school has had no leavers in Year 11 who are not in education, employment or training.
- The small number of pupils who receive part of their education off-site are regularly monitored by the school and there is evidence in some cases of a positive impact on pupils' personal development and welfare in, for example, improved attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- In the online surveys, a significant minority of pupils, parents and staff expressed concerns about the

standards of behaviour in lessons. In discussions, some pupils reported frustration that their learning was regularly being disrupted. These perceptions were confirmed by inspectors in their observations during lessons and around the school. Too many pupils lack the self-discipline to be effective learners.

- There were instances of rowdiness, particularly as pupils moved between lessons, although pupils were often observed to be courteous to others.
- Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is too low and persistent absence is too high. School leaders have not been monitoring this closely enough and do not have a clear understanding of the current figures for the attendance of these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Close examination of the quality of teaching over time and of pupils' work confirms that, across all year groups, pupils are not making sufficient progress. In particular, teachers' poor planning, low expectations and a lack of meaningful feedback are frequently limiting pupils' achievement.
- Outcomes for pupils in Year 11 have declined rapidly since the previous inspection. In 2015, far too few pupils left the school with five or more good GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Only a very small number of pupils achieve well across the range of academic subjects known as the English baccalaureate and this also represents a sharp decline since the previous inspection. As a result, many pupils' options are narrowed when they move on to further study or employment.
- In particular, the progress of pupils in English and mathematics is far too slow, whatever their starting points. Achievement is also poor across a wide range of other subjects such as modern foreign languages, history and geography.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is especially poor. As a result, only a very small number achieve five or more good GCSE grades and none qualify for the English baccalaureate. The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally widened in 2015. No evidence exists that the school is successfully using the extra money provided by the government for these pupils to close these gaps.
- Outcomes for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are also very poor. None of these pupils achieved five or more good GCSE grades in 2015. Not enough teachers meet their individual learning needs during lessons.
- The most-able pupils in the school perform poorly across a range of subjects. They do not achieve the number of high grades in GCSE examinations that should be expected of pupils of their ability.
- Outcomes for the small number of students who undertake part of their education off-site are in line with those of other students in the school.
- There is some evidence of progress in reading for younger pupils. Reading ages of pupils in years 7 and 8 with low levels of literacy have improved rapidly as a result of a scheme where they read to younger children and also due to intensive work with one particular group in Year 7.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 115774 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 10002433 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 608 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mandy Lloyd |
| Headteacher | Alison Elliott |
| Telephone number | 01594 832263 |
| Website | www.lakers.gloucs.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@lakers.gloucs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 3–4 October 2013 |

Information about this school

- Lakers School is a secondary school of smaller-than-average size.
- The school is a member of the Lakers Family Cooperative Learning Trust along with Berry Hill Primary School and Berry Hill Under Fives.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through pupil premium funding is slightly higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4.
- A small number of students undertake part of their education at Gloucestershire College or at Prospect Training Services.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons across all year groups. In these lessons, inspectors also took the opportunity to look carefully at pupils' work and to talk to them about their experiences at the school. Some of these lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors had discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and with a representative from the local authority. Discussions were also held with pupils from all year groups.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, information about the progress of pupils and records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching. Documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also examined.
- Inspectors looked at the 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also reviewed the responses to the online surveys of pupils and staff at the school.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Stephen Lee, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Thomas Winskill | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| William Morgan | Ofsted Inspector |
| Julia Chapman | Ofsted Inspector |

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