

The Lancaster School

Knighton Lane East, Leicester, Leicestershire LE2 6FU

Inspection dates

19–20 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

- Poor leadership since the school's previous inspection has resulted in declining outcomes for pupils.
- Senior leaders fail to evaluate the impact of their work accurately. As a result, not enough is being done to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rapidly.
- Too many pupils make insufficient progress across a wide range of subjects, particularly English and science.
- Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, their peers and other pupils nationally remain too wide and show little sign of closing quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching is much too inconsistent across the school and within departments. The use of assessment information in planning for what pupils can and cannot do is weak so that they flounder in lessons.
- Expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are too low. Information about individual pupils' starting points is used poorly to plan for challenging activities for all pupils, especially the most able.
- Too many pupils repeatedly display inappropriate behaviour both in lessons and at other times during the school day. This slows down the rate of pupils' learning.
- Levels of absence are above the national average. The school has tolerated high levels of regular absence from disadvantaged pupils and pupils with disability and those with special educational needs for too long.
- School leaders and members of the governing body have not acted quickly enough to challenge the lack of success in improving pupils' outcomes and the poor performance of the school. Therefore, it is not improving.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteacher has stabilised the daily workings of the school and raised staff morale. There is now a clear focus on improving teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Pupils make better progress in geography, languages and physical education.
- Pupils get on well together and feel safe.

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?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through linking it closely to the impact it has on pupils' outcomes
 - all leaders and teachers have high expectations of all pupils
 - accurate assessments inform staff and pupils reliably about the pupils' rates of progress
 - governors rigorously monitor and evaluate the school's work to robustly hold senior leaders to account for pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance
 - pupil premium funding is used more effectively to rapidly close the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils in the school and nationally
 - all subject leaders check the quality of teaching rigorously, providing challenge and support where it is not yet good.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and outcomes by ensuring teachers:
 - accurately understand what pupils can and cannot do
 - plan learning which sufficiently challenges all pupils by using information about individual starting points
 - consistently develop pupils' literacy skills through providing opportunities to apply them in other subjects
 - make clear to pupils what they are learning and why
 - ensuring all pupils know what they should do to improve as laid down in the school's policy on feedback to pupils.
- Substantially improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring:
 - the poor behaviour in lessons and in corridors is rapidly eradicated through the consistent application of the new discipline system by all teachers and leaders
 - strategies are developed and implemented to reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent, especially those who are disadvantaged, pupils with disability and those with special educational needs, so that attendance is at least in line with the national average for all year groups
 - all pupils arrive at school punctually.

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

- Poor leadership since the previous inspection has caused most aspects of the school's decline; pupils underachieve, behaviour is poor and the quality of teaching is far too variable. A culture of low expectation exists across the school; pupils are capable of so much more than is demanded of them. In the past, governors have dramatically failed to act swiftly to halt this decline.
- Leaders' views of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are overgenerous. Too little attention is paid to the impact teaching is having on pupils' outcomes and the assessment of pupils' achievement is unreliable. As a result, too little is being done to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment urgently enough.
- Senior leaders' oversight of the impact of the support provided for disadvantaged pupils through the pupil premium has, until recently, been ineffective and not sharp enough. Consequently, support is not having a positive impact on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- The current gaps in performance between pupils who are disadvantaged and all other pupils nationally and other pupils in the school remain too wide and show little sign of closing rapidly, particularly in English and mathematics. A senior leader has recently taken responsibility for monitoring disadvantaged pupils' progress. There are now more precise systems for checking these pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders are ineffective in monitoring their departments to ensure a greater consistency of teaching, learning and assessment to speed up the pupils' progress. A wide variation exists across the school in the quality of feedback to pupils, which does not match the expectations in the school feedback policy. Subject leaders are not rigorously holding teachers to account for weak practice.
- The implementation of the procedures for the management of teachers' performance is insufficiently rigorous. Most teachers' performance targets relating to pupils' achievement are very poorly focused on improving pupils' progress sufficiently. As a result, pupils' progress fails to improve as rapidly as it should.
- Although staffing is more stable now, historic failure to recruit and retain high-quality staff has had a disruptive effect. Staff, pupils and parents all quite rightly pointed to this issue as a significant factor in inhibiting improvement.
- Extra government funding to support the least-able pupils in Year 7 to catch up on their literacy and numeracy skills has previously been used ineffectively. The funding is now used to support pupils in a variety of ways but the monitoring of this is too vague to know what is working well.
- The school's curriculum is traditional and provides work-related learning opportunities for a small number of pupils at various colleges or training providers across the city. However, many pupils on the work-related programmes do not achieve as highly as they should. These pupils, then, are not prepared well enough for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- The interim headteacher, since her very recent appointment in January 2016, has re-established stability in the daily workings of the school and raised staff morale. The interim headteacher has recently implemented a new behaviour policy along with other systems and procedures to improve the school, but it is too soon to see the fruit of these changes. Most teachers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire indicate they are proud to be members of staff at the school and are encouraged by the new ways of working.
- An appropriately planned programme for personal, social and health education along with a range of extra-curricular activities engages pupils well and makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Local authority officers failed to act promptly enough to help leaders halt the decline in the achievement of pupils, especially in English and science. In November 2015, the local authority issued a warning notice to the school. The new Raising Achievement Partner has a good understanding of the school's context and of its strengths and weaknesses and is providing effective support to the school's leadership team and governors.
- The local authority has brokered support from a local national support school and a national leader of education. This school is providing support to improve leadership, the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment information. Teachers told inspectors they are benefiting from this external support. The national leader of education and the interim headteacher have a very clear understanding of the significant issues that exist in the school. They fully understand the urgency needed to rapidly improve the quality of education the school provides.

- Newly qualified teachers may be appointed to the maximum of three teachers in the core subjects only. The national support school has committed to take responsibility for their support and induction.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are vetted and trained as required and pupils feel safe at school. The school makes safety a priority through topics taught in the curriculum. School leaders liaise with parents, and a range of local agencies, including the police when it is necessary, so pupils are supported and safe.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is inadequate because, since the previous inspection, governors have failed to halt the decline in most aspects of the school. Governors previously accepted inaccurate evaluations of the school by previous leaders, failing to challenge sufficiently the highly inflated predictions of pupils' outcomes. Governors failed in holding leaders and teachers to account for their poor performance. They did not use extra government funding appropriately and the pupils who were entitled to this underachieved.
 - Following recent changes in the membership of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, governors are increasingly more aware of their strategic role and responsibilities. Many governors have received training in many areas and are increasingly challenging the school leaders.
 - Governors are ineffective in holding the school to account for the extra funding received to help Year 7 pupils catch up in their English and mathematics.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Teaching is inconsistent across the school and within departments. Too often, the use of assessment is weak so there is an inaccurate view of what pupils can and cannot do. Often learning tasks are either too easy or are not explained clearly enough. Consequently, pupils' needs are not met in lessons.
- Planning for pupils' learning needs is not informed well enough by performance information about the abilities and individual starting points of pupils. As a result of poor planning, teaching does not sufficiently challenge pupils, limiting the amount of progress pupils make in their learning. This is especially the case for the most-able pupils.
- Effective learning routines are insufficiently established, resulting in lessons proceeding at a slow pace and too much learning time being lost. For example, pupils are not encouraged to settle quickly and teachers do not ensure pupils are quiet when they are explaining key learning points. Pupils are then unclear as to what they are learning and why.
- Inspectors witnessed numerous lessons where expectations of behaviour are too low and where poor behaviour is managed inconsistently. This is well supported by a significant number of pupils, parents and staff who expressed their concerns about poor behaviour in lessons through their interviews and survey responses.
- Responsibility for the development of literacy and communication skills throughout school is too narrow and hindering learning. Not enough regular opportunities are provided for pupils to develop ideas and make sure they write with sufficient accuracy. This is a key reason why their progress is severely restricted. Similarly, mathematical skills are rarely reinforced as there is no established school-wide approach to help pupils develop their mathematical skills.
- The school's preferred approach to giving feedback is not consistently applied by all teachers. Where pupils are given opportunities to respond to precise advice, such as in geography, physical education and languages, pupils make better progress. However, pupils' books show that effective feedback is patchy, which means that they are not getting regular and precise guidance on how to improve their work as is expected by the school guidelines.
- Pupils take insufficient pride in the work in their books. Their work is often messy and accepted because of the culture of low expectation which permeates throughout school.
- Teaching across the school is beginning to improve as a result of the recent training and external support which is now in place. Where teaching is effective, teachers have good knowledge and exude passion for their subject. Pupils respond positively to this, lessons now proceed at a good pace and learning time is maximised. For example, in a performing arts lesson, the teacher used a pupil's performance to model the quality of the work he expected and spoke knowledgeably about his subject. Pupils were inspired to learn and had a deep understanding of how they could adapt and improve their performance.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school has not taught pupils to behave in a manner which supports their learning.
- While a number of the pupils have positive attitudes to learning, too few pupils take full advantage of lessons to develop their understanding thoroughly. Poor behaviour is slowing the rate of progress for these individuals and other pupils.
- The majority of parents responding to Parent View are confident their child is looked after well and is happy at school. Robust systems are in place to offer help and support, sometimes involving external agencies when appropriate.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying and agree that incidences of bullying are rare, expressing confidence in the school's ability to tackle bullying when it does happen. This is supported by the school's own records and their achievement of the 'Anti-bullying Community Award' in 2015 from Leicester City Council.
- The school environment is well respected. The buildings are graffiti free, and there is little litter indoors or outdoors.
- Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe online because they are taught about it explicitly in computing lessons. Pupils are given opportunities to learn about their physical safety and well-being through a planned programme of personal, social and health education. During the inspection the police delivered a powerful presentation on 'gun and knife crime' to Year 11 as part of this programme.
- A small number of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 access some of their education at alternative providers. The school adequately monitors these pupils to ensure they attend, are safe and behave well.
- The multi-ethnic school community is harmonious because pupils know each other well. One pupil told the inspector that the best thing about the school was 'how well everyone gets on'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Too many pupils repeatedly behave poorly and display inappropriate behaviour both in lessons and at other times during the school day.
- Inspectors witnessed around the school site numerous incidents of boisterous behaviour, use of homophobic language, swearing, poor manners and pupils showing little pride in their uniform. A large majority of the staff and parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed behaviour was not well managed.
- Pupils' overall attendance has declined and levels of absence are above the national average in 2015. Persistent absence is high for pupils with disability and those with special educational needs, and disadvantaged pupils. The school has failed to support these pupils well enough; therefore, there is little sign of improvement.
- Punctuality in the mornings when arriving at school and to lessons is exceedingly poor. The school monitors this but there are far too many inconsistencies in how well this is managed and dealt with. The school recognises there is a lot more work to do to improve punctuality.
- Within lessons, when learning fails to inspire or motivate pupils, or is insufficiently challenging, pupils become distracted and uninterested. Their behaviour disrupts the learning of others. Where learning inspires pupils, they respond positively and enjoy their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with disability or special educational needs are disproportionately excluded. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen substantially but remains too high as individual pupils refuse to comply with the school's recent stricter regime.
- Since her arrival, the interim headteacher has raised expectations of pupils' behaviour and has introduced the 'Lancaster Ways', taking a firm stance on unacceptable behaviour. Pupils and staff told inspectors that behaviour is beginning to improve, but there remain too many inconsistencies in the ways in which poor behaviour is dealt with.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Outcomes have declined since the last inspection. The proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE declined over the last three years and in 2015 this number was well below the national average. This is because pupils fail to make strong or rapid enough progress.
- Too few pupils make the progress expected of them across a range of subjects, particularly English and science. This hampers pupils' opportunities at the next stage of their education, employment and training as too many do not attain the grades required to follow more academic courses at post-16 level.
- Underachievement is widespread. Disadvantaged pupils make particularly poor progress. Their individual needs are insufficiently met in lessons and extra support is used ineffectively to help raise outcomes. The gap between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally is very wide.
- Too few of the most-able pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders' and teachers' expectations are not high enough. Subsequently, these pupils fail to gain enough A* and A grades in English and mathematics at GCSE.
- Tracking of pupils' progress and predictions of pupils' performance have been wholly unreliable and overinflated. The interim headteacher has recently implemented more rigour by using leaders at the national support school to validate teachers' judgements; this is now leading to a more accurate understanding of pupils' current progress in some subjects but there remains limited confidence in the reliability of the school's predictions for this year.
- Year 7 catch-up funding (government funding for those entering secondary school with below average standards in English and mathematics) is starting to help younger pupils make effective progress.
- Pupils with disability and those with special educational needs make expected progress from their starting points. This is because they receive extra support that is effective and targeted to their needs.
- Learners' achievement in the work-related courses is poor. The progress they make from their starting points is weak and therefore they do not achieve the higher grades in their qualifications.
- Pupils make better progress in languages, humanities and physical education. This is a result of good teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects and of the subject leaders having high expectations of their teachers and pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	120283
Local authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	10001840

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	897
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Rob Summers
Headteacher	Anna Fisher
Telephone number	0116 2703176
Website	http://www.lancaster.leicester.sch.uk
Email address	admin@lancaster.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2013

Information about this school

- The Lancaster School is smaller than the average-sized boys' secondary school.
- The interim headteacher has been in post since the start of January 2016. A fifth of the teachers are temporary.
- The school receives significant support from the national leader in education and staff from Babington College. This is a national support school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or adopted.
- The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is over half and well above average. The largest minority ethnic groups are of Indian, African, Caribbean and Pakistani heritage.
- The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Seven Key Stage 3 pupils access part of their education at Carisbrooke Learning Centre, and seven Key Stage 4 pupils attend Braunstone Skills Centre along with work experience placements across the city.
- The school is a specialist sports college.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons or part lessons, including joint lesson observations conducted with the interim headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, four representatives from the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with the national leader in education from the national support school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including information on pupils' outcomes, the schools' self-evaluation, minutes of meetings, records of behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils.
- The inspection team scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and observed their conduct at break, lunch and home times.
- The inspectors took account of 48 responses to the online Parent View survey and 43 staff questionnaire returns.

Inspection team

Sue Vasey, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Bernard	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Burton	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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