



Lode Heath School and Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104113
LEA Solihull
Inspection number 277074
Inspection dates 23 February 2006 to 24 February 2006
Reporting inspector David Roberts AI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lode Lane
School category	Community		Solihull
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		West Midlands B91 2HW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7041421
Number on roll	993	Fax number	0121 7112663
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Rhys Jones
Date of previous inspection	11 November 2002	Headteacher	Mr John Burton

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 23 February 2006 - 24 February 2006	Inspection number 277074
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lode Heath School is an average size, mixed comprehensive school situated in Solihull. It achieved specialist Sports College status in September 2003. A relatively small proportion of the students are from disadvantaged homes. The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic groups is below average. Very few students have English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the leadership's view that the school's overall effectiveness is good. The school has strengths in all areas including a number of outstanding features, and few weaknesses. Standards are above average and students of all abilities make good progress. The care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and lead to some outstanding elements in the students' personal development. Teaching is good, as is the curriculum. The school's development as a specialist sports college has had a very positive and widespread impact on its continuing improvement. The students make an outstanding contribution to both the school community and the wider community and their attitudes and behaviour are positive. The school's leadership at all levels, including the contribution of governors, is good. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. The school has a clear commitment, and good capacity, to improve further. However, the multiple initiatives and plans for development are not sharply enough prioritised to ensure a clear focus on raising achievement further. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the provision. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Senior leaders should identify from the wide range of strategies currently planned, those which are most likely to raise standards further, concentrate the school's efforts and resources on these and ensure that their impact is regularly evaluated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their above average standards when they start school in Year 7, students go on to reach standards which are generally above average by the time they leave. The school sets challenging targets for students' performance and most of these are reached. The proportion of students who achieve the highest GCSE grades varies between subjects, being greater in science than in English and mathematics. Students in Years 7-9 make good progress in English, mathematics and science. In Years 10 and 11, progress is strong in English, mathematics, science, religious education and music, but relatively weaker in geography and art and design. The school has now introduced secure strategies for securing better performance in these subjects. Standards of literacy and numeracy, and competence in using information and communication technology (ICT), are good. Where the school has identified from previous examination and test results any relative underperformance of certain groups of pupils, it has investigated the causes and taken effective remedial action. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make equally good progress as the other students. The small number of students from minority ethnic groups also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

High levels of enjoyment and participation in a wide range of activities reflect the students' good personal development and well-being. Attendance is very good, and the rate of unauthorised absence is well below average. Students enjoy the range of learning activities which the varied teaching provides. Pupils generally behave well around the school and in lessons, and there are few exclusions. Students' attitudes to work are carefully monitored. Sports College status has made an outstanding contribution to the students' personal development, increasing levels of self-esteem and encouraging healthy lifestyles. The students are very aware of the importance of a good diet and exercise to health and the risks of drugs misuse, and have a mature understanding of sexual health issues. Attitudes developed in physical education programmes have carried through to many aspects of school life. The students develop well socially and make an excellent contribution to the school community through the various responsibilities they undertake, including through the school council and the mentoring by older students of the younger ones. Strong moral codes guide their attitudes and they appreciate other people's beliefs and values as well as their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, with a number of strengths. Several outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection, for instance, in English and modern foreign languages. In these lessons imaginative activities, often making adventurous use of modern technology, stimulated students' enjoyment of learning and the lessons moved forward at a brisk pace. Much of the good teaching has some outstanding elements. As a result of the predominantly good teaching, students have very positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour in lessons is often exemplary. In planning lessons, teachers make good use of data about students' performance to match the needs of the range of students in each class. Teachers are well aware of the particular needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and provide appropriately for them to help ensure they progress equally well. The school is very effective in monitoring lesson quality, spreading good practice and addressing the few weaknesses. Where, despite the efforts of managers and subject leaders, teaching remains relatively weak, this results in unsettled behaviour which, while it never gets out of hand, does hamper the learning of other students. In these few lessons, the school's learning behaviour strategy is not being implemented effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is successful in meeting students' aspirations and interests. It is broad and balanced with an appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy, ICT and

investigational skills. The students like the well-focused, half-termly 'immersion days' when they can learn in more depth about citizenship and health, including sex and drugs education. However, the role of form tutors in providing daily support is limited because of insufficient time. The school has introduced more flexible choices to better meet all students' needs beyond the age of 14, but agrees that this is still not fully developed. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they receive effective support based on good knowledge of their needs, broken into manageable targets shared with staff and parents. Students greatly appreciate the excellent enrichment programme the school offers. Participation is high, and contributes significantly to students' enjoyment and personal development. The strong emphasis on sport and health is a further significant strength, both within and outside lessons, with programmes specifically tailored for the students' differing abilities. A good programme of activities from Year 8 upwards prepares students well for the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school offers outstanding care, support and guidance to its students and this results in students feeling highly motivated to succeed, both academically and in the responsibilities they are given to contribute to the community. Students speak very highly of the very effective further education and careers advice they receive, and they also appreciate the availability of all staff to listen to their concerns. One student commented 'they take a lot of time out to help us'. Students feel that their views are taken seriously and acted upon. The school has well organised systems in place to ensure students' safety, including very thorough child protection procedures. Students know that any bullying is dealt with swiftly. The exceptionally thorough monitoring of students means that any underachievement or personal problems are quickly identified, and support put in place. Additionally, very good liaison between staff and external agencies enables vulnerable students, those with English as an additional language, as well as those with learning difficulties, to make good progress. Students' reports have improved since the previous inspection and now provide appropriate details of levels and grades, as well as specific targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior managers work well as a team and lead the school effectively. They communicate well with staff, parents and students and have created a shared ethos where all students feel valued and secure. Their implementation of clear behaviour management strategies has reduced both the number of exclusions and disruption in classes. They have addressed the issues noted in the last inspection report. Designation as a specialist sports college has had an outstanding impact on participation rates in school activities, the improved use of data for pupil tracking and targeted intervention strategies. It has created many opportunities to build on the coaching skills of both staff and students.

There are excellent links with other schools and community organisations. There is an effective system of performance management for staff. Subject leaders are held accountable for the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. Professional development opportunities are well targeted towards the sharing of good practice between colleagues and this is minimising the incidence of weaker teaching. The school actively seeks the views of parents and students about what goes on in school. It has listened, for example, to the opinions of pupils about the menus and prices in the dining room as part of the healthy eating initiative. The school has collected a large volume of evidence to support the self-evaluation process, but does not always use it selectively to analyse outcomes. Governors are very supportive of the school and they challenge the school well to raise standards. With the senior staff, they have recognised the need to identify and evaluate strategic priorities more clearly in the school improvement plan. The school is well placed to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed very much our recent visit to your school and particularly the warm welcome which your senior representatives gave us. We very much appreciated your courtesy and your willingness to discuss aspects of the school with us.

We were pleased to see how, in the vast majority of lessons, you enjoyed your work and responded well to the varied approaches to teaching which the school provides for you. It was pleasing to see so much good behaviour, in and out of lessons. It was good to learn of your confidence in the 'credits and debits' system which is mainly working well to ensure good behaviour, although there are times when you are not responding as well as you should to this.

Your commitment to your learning, and the outstanding care, guidance and support which your teachers provide, mean that nearly all of you are making good progress as you move up through the school. Your teachers keep a careful watch on your progress and are helping in a number of ways to make sure you all do well in your tests and examinations.

We were also impressed by the very positive influence the school's sports specialism has had – for instance on helping to ensure you know how to live healthily and by providing a very strong range of extra activities, which you clearly enjoy. Many of you make very valuable contributions to school life and to the community. Like yourselves, your parents are generally pleased with the school, and they are right to be so.

Your school is well run by the headteacher and his staff, who are strongly committed to ensuring the school keeps on improving. We have suggested they focus on a few clear ways of doing this, which we are sure they will share with you.

We wish each of you well deserved success in the future.