



# Lymm High Voluntary Controlled School

Inspection Report

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education  
and care

**Unique Reference Number** 111448  
**LEA** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 278702  
**Inspection dates** 7 November 2005 to 8 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Judith Tolley CfBT Lead Inspector

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Oughtrington Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Lymm
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Cheshire WA13 0RB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 755458
<b>Number on roll</b>	1958	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 758439
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr G Hawley
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Roger Lounds

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by 5 additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Lymm High Voluntary Controlled School is a large school with a large sixth form. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The school is a Language College, holds the Artsmark Gold Award for performing arts, Sportsmark Silver Award and is a 'Hub school' for sports provision. It also has Training School status as part of a consortium with 5 other schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

The senior management correctly see their school as an outstanding one. The school's ethos is exceptional because expectations are high and the school ensures all pupils are given the means to achieve their potential. The pupils attain high standards and make excellent progress both in the main school and in the sixth form. The very high quality of the school's care for all pupils is reflected in their warm regard for it and the respect they show towards their teachers. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. This is reflected in pupils' excellent attitudes towards their learning and relationships within the school. However, the behaviour of a minority of pupils occasionally disrupts their own learning and the learning of others. Excellent links exist with a range of external bodies to support the education and welfare of pupils. Pupils feel safe and enjoy their school lives. Good teaching and a very rich curriculum make important contributions to pupils' learning and personal development. The school has excellent and astute leadership focussed clearly on continued improvement and is efficiently managed to ensure it provides excellent value for money. There has been significant and sustained improvement since the last inspection. It has an excellent capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The school assesses the effectiveness of the sixth form as good; inspectors judge it to be outstanding. Excellent leadership and management have overseen the very successful expansion of both student numbers and courses, including vocational options. Liaison between staff with differing responsibilities for aspects of sixth form work is good and evolving. The quality of teaching is outstanding. This, combined with the maturity, commitment and intellectual curiosity of the students, leads to excellent achievement. Standards have improved and more than half of students achieve the highest grades at advanced level and the majority continue to higher education. The quality of care and guidance is excellent, a minor weakness being the timing of some advice about university courses. A fine balance has been achieved between the drive for academic excellence, and stimulating ways of successfully developing students as individuals.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Make better use of staff expertise and of information gleaned from lesson monitoring to spread best practice in teaching and learning styles.
- Improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils in lessons through more consistent classroom routines and expectations of behaviour.
- Ensure that sixth form students have information about universities in good time to consider their applications.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Learners join the school with above average results from their primary schools. They then make progress at a very fast rate. The results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 represent exceptional attainment. Inspectors agree with the school that the learners' achievement is outstanding.

Recent results in the end of Year 9 tests have been significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. The provisional results for 2005 are higher than the well above average results of 2004. There was a significant improvement in the numbers gaining the higher levels in English.

Recent improvement in GCSE results has been remarkable. In 2001 seventy per cent gained 5 GCSEs at the higher grades of A\*- C. That figure has increased each year by at least five per cent and was above ninety per cent in the provisional results for 2005. Results are far higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

The headteacher and his staff set very challenging targets. Rigorous data analysis and action led to over a third of the 2005 GCSE grades being at A\*- A, including a threefold increase for this measure in mathematics. Learners of all backgrounds and prior attainment thrive. The achievement of boys is particularly good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) make very good progress. The 2005 figure at grades 5 A\*-G was significantly high.

Achievement is outstanding in the sixth form. Students start their sixth form courses with broadly average standards for embarking on A level studies. A2 results in 2004 were above average. They improved significantly in 2005 when more than half the results were at the higher grades of A to B. The proportion gaining grades A to E was significantly higher than is usually the case in most schools.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. It makes a very positive contribution to the quality of their learning. During their time in the school, the vast majority of pupils mature into confident, polite, tolerant and thoughtful young adults, who are keen to make a positive contribution to life. Pupils greatly enjoy being at school. Their participation in extra-curricular activities is high and their attendance is consistently well above the national average. They show good consideration of others as they move around the large site in a safe manner and relationships are very supportive. Pupils behave well, although in a few lessons some pupils are slow to settle and their low level chatter impinges on their own and others' learning.

Through the Personal and Social Education programme, enterprise activities and work experience pupils gain an increasing awareness of the world of work at home and abroad.

Pupils respond very positively to the many opportunities provided for them to take on responsibility. Through the Hall system, pupils of all ages develop very strong

collaborative and business enterprise skills along with team spirit and healthy competitiveness. The school committee has helped to improve the healthiness of food available in school, as well as the queuing arrangements. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness and mirror very well staff members' respectful manner towards others. They are imaginative and generous fund raisers for charity.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and excellent on many occasions. In the sixth form it is outstanding. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge, which they use very effectively in their teaching. They plan in detail and explain clearly what it is that pupils need to do to move their learning forward. Lessons are well planned with clear demonstrations and activities and resources are well sequenced, enabling pupils to build effectively on previous learning. Pupils make the best progress when they are given opportunities to work informally in pairs and small groups to test out their ideas. When this is the case pupils are absorbed by their learning and participate enthusiastically in class discussion as a result. Lessons move at a fast pace with a variety of activities to support pupils' different ways of learning. In the best lessons teachers have the confidence to stand back and let pupils take charge of their own learning, using probing questions to guide and stimulate rather than direct. They observe carefully, listen well to pupils and use the information thus gained to raise expectations, encourage greater effort and to support those who are having difficulty.

Teachers' marking usually provides precise guidance to help pupils improve and teachers use the information well when planning activities to suit those of different abilities. However, this is not always the case. There is some inconsistency in teachers' ability to manage classroom behaviour with the result that a few pupils are not fully involved in their learning. The norm is that pupils are very conscientious learners, concentrate well, ask pertinent questions and show pride in their work, but occasionally these positive attitudes lapse.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Pupils enjoy a rich, exciting and varied curriculum. It is regularly evaluated and is well tuned to their needs, aptitudes and aspirations. As pupils move up the school, opportunities progressively widen. At Key Stage 4 there are numerous pathways and flexible combinations to help pupils develop and pursue the full range of their interests. The school has improved its information and communications technology (ICT) provision and worked with determination to improve vocational education. Simultaneously, stronger progression links are being built with the Sixth Form vocational courses. A small number of Year 10 pupils for whom the full range of courses is not appropriate

is following an alternative curriculum, which better meets their needs. 'Honours' (Gifted and talented) pupils have very good opportunities to develop their talents through enrichment and accelerated learning programmes. The very good provision for pupils with LDD through the Learning Development Department enables them to progress as well as their peers and the small number of pupils with English as an Additional Language makes exceptional progress.

The quantity, quality and popularity of extra-curricular opportunities make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal and academic development.

#### Specialist status

The school makes very good use of its specialism in modern languages to provide excellent opportunities for pupils of all ages and, increasingly, the wider community. A wide range of languages is offered, with programmes to meet the needs of all pupils including fast track GCSE in Year 10, vocational courses with language content and accredited independent learning packages in the sixth form. Personal and academic development is supported by a vast array of trips, exchanges and work experience opportunities abroad. Community partnerships, already at a high level, are being further strengthened by developing adult education classes and business links. The Specialist Status gives strong support to the school's very good results.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding support and guidance for pupils of all ages. Procedures to ensure health and safety are good. Arrangements to support vulnerable pupils and promote child protection are excellent. Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs. They use a very wide range of external agencies to add to their own expertise when offering guidance. The presence of, for instance, sixth form buddies for Year 7 pupils or the Year 10 peer mentors means that pupils are able to talk to a variety of people when facing difficulties. Pupils greatly appreciate teachers' willingness to give up their time to explain things further or provide extra activities.

Teachers provide very clear information about examination requirements and comprehensive careers guidance is available to help pupils make important choices. Study skills days and extra classes enhance the academic support. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do to reach their potential. This is because the school sets challenging targets and tracks their progress rigorously.

Parents make a strong contribution to their children's learning. The school keeps them very well informed about their child's progress. Parents support the school's values and generously fund or attend many extra activities.

### Leadership and management

#### Grade: 1

Leadership by the headteacher is outstanding; his unswerving determination to raise standards year on year and to provide a wide curriculum which will allow all pupils to

achieve to their potential has been very successful. The other senior managers share the headteacher's vision and resolve and the members of the Headship Team work effectively together to achieve these aims. Middle managers are very effective in achieving the challenging targets set for improvement.

The senior managers of the school know its main strengths and weaknesses very well and are energetic in seeking improvements. The system of tracking pupils' progress, setting targets and involving both pupils and their parents is very effective in raising standards and ensuring pupils achieve their potential. The school's targets are appropriate and provide a secure yardstick of how well it is doing. The monitoring of lessons provides an accurate view of the quality of teaching, but it is limited in scope and does not inform as effectively as it might the professional development of staff and the ways in which they might engage and challenge pupils more effectively.

Governors provide strong support and are actively involved in the life of the school. They have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and act effectively as a critical friend.

The success of the sixth form stems from the vision and drive of the school's management team, who insist on its being seen as an integral part of the whole school. Concerns from the last inspection about accommodation for the sixth form and their opportunities to access ICT have been fully addressed.



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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Following our visit to inspect your school, we should like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for your contribution to the inspection. We should also like to tell you our findings. As a result of our visit, we have decided that Lymm High Voluntary Controlled School is an outstanding one. It has many real strengths; for example, the range of subjects and extra curricular activities you are offered is very rich and very well matched to your needs and aspirations; this plays an important role in enabling you all to do your best.

At the same time, teachers have high expectations of you and track your progress closely so that you know how well you are doing and how to improve. You usually have excellent attitudes towards your learning and get on very well with each other and your teachers. However, in our discussions with you, several of you expressed concern that there were a small number of students who did not behave well in some lessons. Obviously, if students behave badly, they stop others from learning and we have asked the school to put this right.

The adults in the school work very hard to care for you. You are treated very fairly and bullying is usually quickly and effectively dealt with. You are also given excellent guidance about what you should do next and are very well prepared for when you leave school. However, some sixth form students were concerned that the school is a little slow to give you information for university applications. The school has been asked to put this right.

The quality of teaching and learning is good; there are many excellent lessons but students did point out to us that this is not always the case. We have asked the school to work with teachers to try to make all lessons as interesting as the best. The school has excellent leadership and management and the Headship Team is always striving to improve the school and the examination results. It has been very successful in achieving this since the last inspection.