



# Longfield School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114322  
**LEA** Darlington  
**Inspection number** 279362  
**Inspection dates** 20 March 2006 to 21 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Brian Blake

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Longfield Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Darlington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		County Durham DL3 0HT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 380815
<b>Number on roll</b>	924	<b>Fax number</b>	01325 254219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Cllr Elizabeth Hart
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 December 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Keith Cotgrave

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 20 March 2006 - 21 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279362
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Longfield is a mixed, 11–16 community secondary school with specialist sports college status. It has slightly fewer pupils on roll than the national average, with marginally more boys than girls. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than found nationally. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low. The socio-economic background of pupils is generally the same as found in most areas across the country.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Longfield School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school knows itself very well, and senior managers have identified a number of key areas that need to be significantly improved in order to raise standards across the school. In 2005, standards were below the national averages at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Standards at Key Stage 3 were below, primarily because of underperformance in mathematics. At Key Stage 4, English, French, Spanish, science, drama, geography, history, mathematics, and vocational studies were below average. Religious education and physical education, however, do well and are achieving above the levels expected. This underperformance at both key stages resulted in the school missing all of its challenging targets in 2005.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school has been very active in responding to the Every Child Matters agenda, and has begun to implement a number of successful strategies that are positively influencing outcomes for all pupils across the school.

The overall quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, sometimes good or outstanding. However, some teachers are not consistent enough in reaching these standards, for example, in mathematics and religious education, which results in lessons where pupils do not make sufficient progress in their learning. The school has been successful in developing its curriculum at Key Stage 4, by introducing flexibility and choice for pupils, but its specialist status for sport has yet to make a significant impact across the curriculum. In some lessons, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop independent learning.

The school effectively supports and cares for its pupils. The majority of pupils feel safe in school, but there is a minority whose behaviour is disrupting the learning of the majority, and causing concern to some pupils and their parents. The school is alert to this, and is working hard to tackle any anti-social behaviour in lessons and around the school more generally.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with a number of strengths. Underperformance caused by weak teaching is being addressed, and is meeting with some success, but there is still much to do to ensure that all pupils get the quality of education that meets their needs. The school's capacity to improve is good and its value for money satisfactory.

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

Focus on:

- Raising standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3, and English, French, Spanish, science, drama, geography, history, mathematics, and vocational studies at Key Stage 4.
- Improving some inadequate teaching in religious education and mathematics.

- Providing more planned curricular opportunities for independent and personalised learning for all pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, with the school generally maintaining a consistent rate of improvement. The attainment on entry to the school varies marginally from year to year, with the most recent entries achieving standards close to national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2005, standards were below the national average due, primarily, to the underperformance in mathematics. Although there were some improvements at Key Stage 4 in 2005, overall attainment was below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more good GCSE passes, but above for five GCSEs at grades A\* - G. Pupils did significantly better than expected in religious studies and physical education. However, they did significantly less well than average in English, French, Spanish, science, drama, geography, history, mathematics, and vocational studies. The school missed its challenging targets in 2005.

Despite the below average standards, the overall progress of pupils during their time at the school is in line with the national average. In 2005, pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 was just above the national average and, over the whole school, in line. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory overall.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. In lessons seen, a majority of pupils learned and behaved well, and enjoyed school activities. However, the school recognises that the behaviour of a relatively small number of pupils is having an adverse effect on overall progress in some lessons, and is implementing a range of well targeted strategies aimed at improving the attitudes and behaviour of particularly disruptive pupils. Attendance is close to the national average. Relationships are good; pupils get on well with each other and with staff, and generally feel safe. The school's specialist sports college status has provided a good range of physical activity for all pupils, including opportunities to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme. These, and the variety and balance of meals on offer at lunchtime, contribute well to pupils' development of a healthy lifestyle. Health lessons give proper consideration to social and moral issues associated with the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Pupils' spiritual education is good. The very effective school council allows pupils to make a positive contribution to the school community. Effective citizenship lessons heighten pupils' awareness of their responsibilities in the wider community. Pupils are prepared well for life after leaving school, through good careers advice and work-related enterprise opportunities. The school ensures that good opportunities are provided for pupils to appreciate and respect the breadth of cultural and ethnic traditions found in the wider community.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The majority of the teaching seen was satisfactory, with some that was good or outstanding. However, some teachers do not reach these standards consistently enough. The school is alert to weaknesses in teaching, and has in place some strategies to improve overall quality. A coaching programme, involving trios of teachers, enables stronger teachers to work alongside those who may need support. There is clear vision and direction in the school's aims to improve further both teaching and learning, but it is too early yet to assess the full impact of these initiatives. In lessons, pupils enjoy opportunities to work independently, in pairs or groups, but in some lessons too few opportunities are provided that encourage independence in learning. Pupils respond well to varied and challenging activities that are conducted at a good pace, and which engage their interest, and in these lessons their individual needs are better met. However, where the pace of the lesson is slower, pupils feel less involved and are not as fully engaged in their learning as they could be. This leads to disruption on the part of a minority of pupils, and a barrier to learning for all. All lessons have clear objectives, and assessment is regular. However, everyday marking and the use of homework are inconsistent across the school. Their use for developing greater pupil understanding of the knowledge and skills required for attaining their learning targets is not yet exploited to full effect.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but has a number of strengths. An expanding range of academic and vocational courses at Key Stage 4 is supplemented well by a number of basic skills and work-related alternatives for lower attaining pupils, and those at risk of becoming disaffected. Pupils' appreciation of the variety and quality of extra-curricular activities is evident in the numbers who participate. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from a good enrichment programme. The developing provision for e-learning engages and motivates pupils, particularly in relation to completing homework. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The school recognises the need to improve further the planned opportunities for personalised and independent learning, and to provide more entry level courses in core subjects at Key Stage 4. The specialist sports college status has had little impact on the curriculum, other than the more widespread use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has clear child protection measures in place, including a designated senior teacher. The arrangements for looked after and

other vulnerable children are good, with effective links to external organisations. The school acts quickly to meet the needs identified from pupil surveys. Some good consultation work with Year 9 pupils has taken place to ensure that when they reach Key Stage 4, the curriculum better meets their needs. An effective system for target setting has also been set up to ensure that all pupils are fully aware of the school's expectations of them. However, opportunities for pupils to currently monitor their own progress and set personal targets are inconsistent across the school. A system of lead teacher managers for each year group (progress managers) is increasing the effectiveness of the school in tracking underachieving and absent pupils. Support for these pupils, as for those with disaffection or difficulties over transition into secondary school, is effectively provided by a team of learning mentors. With an important input from the school council, the school has instituted a system of rewards and sanctions that is successfully improving the behaviour and enjoyment of some of its most challenging pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, well supported by his senior management team, has brought about considerable improvement over the past two years, following a long period of instability and decline. Much time and effort has, of necessity, been devoted to putting in place the most basic policies and systems to enable the school to function efficiently. There is a clear and shared sense of purpose and direction, driven by the need to raise standards. Effective self-evaluation, informed by extensive surveys of pupils, parents and staff, has identified key areas for improvement. A new and ambitious computer-based system to integrate whole-school and departmental planning is under implementation, though it does not, at present, lead to effective departmental improvement plans that set out clearly both proposed actions and the procedures for evaluating the impact of their work. Middle managers and their teams are well supported, but are also held closely to account for the achievement of clear and challenging targets. Extensive monitoring and review of performance is undertaken by both senior and middle managers. However, these developments are at an early stage and have not yet had time to bring about the consistent implementation of the most effective practice to raise standards across the school. Nevertheless, pupils and staff display high levels of motivation and aspirations for future improvements. Governors are well informed and supportive, but could do more to challenge the school. Financial planning and management are sound. The specialist sports college status has brought benefits in refurbishment and resources, particularly in the recently installed computer network. The school is aware that there is more to do in supporting underperforming departments, in developing the curriculum further, in the use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning and, above all, to build on strategies that underpin specialist sports college status. The school has good capacity to effect further improvement.

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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>	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<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>	3	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	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<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

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Mr Keith Cotgrave

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22 March 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome that you gave me and the other inspectors when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting with your teachers, and talking to many of you about life at Longfield School. Your behaviour was generally good, but we recognise that in some lessons there is a small minority whose behaviour is affecting the learning and progress of others. Your teachers are very aware of this, and are working hard to introduce systems that reduce this type of anti-social behaviour, and allow you to enjoy attending school and achieving the best of which you are capable.

Most of the teaching that we saw was satisfactory, sometimes good or outstanding. However, not all of your teachers consistently achieve these standards, which results in some of you achieving less well than you should. The standards that you achieve are currently below those we would expect to see, with some subjects not doing as well as they should. We were pleased that the headteacher and other staff knew what needs to be done in order to raise standards and improve all aspects of school life. You can help the school improve, through hard work and good behaviour. Most of you work well in your lessons, but we feel that the school could do more to provide you with opportunities to develop your independence when working on different tasks.

In order to help you all to do better, we have asked the school to improve the following:

raise standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3, and English, French, Spanish, science, drama, geography, history, mathematics, and vocational studies at Key Stage 4

improve some teaching in mathematics and religious education

provide you with opportunities to develop independent and more personalised learning.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Brian Blake HMI

Lead inspector