



Lancaster Girls' Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119811
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280670
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Alan Brine

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Regent Street
School category	Foundation		Lancaster
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Lancashire LA1 1SF
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01524 32010
Number on roll	894	Fax number	01524 846220
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Philip Oglethorpe
Date of previous inspection	1 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Pam Barber

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 8 March 2006 - 9 March 2006	Inspection number 280670
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is a selective 11-18 grammar school for girls serving the city of Lancaster and the surrounding area. It has 894 pupils of which 327 are in the sixth form. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. About a tenth of the pupils come from a minority ethnic background. The ability range of pupils in the sixth form is extended because there are a large number of incomers from other schools in the area arriving with a pattern of lower previous attainment.

The school was one of the first specialist technology colleges in the country and it recently acquired a second specialism in languages. In addition, the school has Leading Edge status and holds an International School award. It also has Artsmark, Sportsmark, Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The inspectors agree with the school's view that Lancaster Girls' Grammar is an outstanding school with an equally outstanding sixth form. Pupils enter with standards of attainment which are well above average and these are built upon very effectively throughout the school. Pupils achieve well and results at the end of Key Stage 3 are very high. At GCSE the results are amongst the best in the country. This pattern of high achievement is reflected across the whole curriculum. Standards in the sixth form are also extremely high.

The school has an excellent climate for learning and sets very high standards both in terms of academic achievement and personal development. The girls' attitudes to learning, their relationships with one another, and their behaviour and attendance are exemplary.

The high quality of the teaching ensures pupils make excellent progress and also fosters a love of learning. The curriculum is very broad and balanced and meets the needs of the pupils very effectively. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact on the curriculum and has contributed to the high standards. The provision of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is exceptional and ensures that the pupils have a rich education. The provision for care, guidance and support is similarly outstanding and all pupils receive excellent advice about their progress and the next stages of their education.

Leadership and management are outstanding and ensure the school provides very good value for money. The headteacher's contribution to the school's success is exceptional. The senior leadership team work effectively with the staff and governors to ensure high standards are maintained. The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been maintained and built upon and the capacity for sustained improvement in the future is excellent. Parents and pupils are very positive about the school and recognise the high quality of its educational provision.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. This is the view of parents and students. The girls make rapid progress, achieve very well and attain high standards. They have the skills to work independently and collaboratively and are analytical and critical. They are eager for responsibility and undertake it willingly. Teaching is outstanding and the level of care and support afforded the girls is exceptional. This concern for the individual welfare and personal development of every girl is characteristic of all who work with the students. The curriculum meets the needs of all, particularly those who enter the sixth form from other schools. An extensive range of activities and visits out of school broaden and enrich students' understanding of their work and encourage initiative and enterprise. Students receive excellent guidance to inform their decisions on higher education and employment. They benefit from links with universities and local, national

and international employers. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The girls have an excellent role model in the Head of Sixth Form and her enthusiasm and commitment to her work are exemplary. The sixth form provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

The inspection did not identify any specific areas for further improvement

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards in the main school are very high and achievement is outstanding.

Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with well above average attainment and go on to achieve very good levels of success at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. In 2005, 100% of the pupils achieved five GCSE A* to C grades, the school's agreed target for the year. Better than this, the proportion of grades A and A* was four times the national average. Over 50% of the grades were at the highest grade A*, an average of five A* s per pupil, which makes the school's results amongst the very best in the country. This amounts to excellent achievement.

Results at AS and A2 level are consistently well above average. Students' average points scores in 2005 place the school as one of the best in the country. Over three quarters of the grades in 2005 were at grades A and B. Achievement is good for all groups of students represented in the sixth form, including those who join the school at sixth form level, and whose previous attainment was not always as high as those who come up through the school.

Pupils of different abilities and backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of the girls is outstanding. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Attitudes to learning are exemplary. The girls clearly enjoy school and this is reflected in their well above average attendance. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. A learning culture pervades the school. Students make a highly significant contribution to their own community by acting as trained mentors and by ensuring their voice is heard at the school council and in focused discussion groups. Many are keen to help others as well as themselves and give generously of their time in helping, for example, older people in the local community and children in less developed countries. Through work experience, extensive links with local businesses and successful young enterprise activities they develop excellent skills and knowledge which prepare them very well for the world of work. Pupils are encouraged to debate spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and

as a result are able to present balanced viewpoints which show a high level of understanding and a sensitive awareness of controversial topics such as human cloning. A comprehensive programme of lessons and activities related to pupils' personal and social development successfully encourages girls to follow healthy and safe lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning throughout the school are outstanding. In nearly all the lessons observed teaching was at least good and in a high proportion it was outstanding. The impressive teaching is based on high expectations and challenge. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is excellent and they communicate this with vigour and enthusiasm. Teachers deploy a wide and effective range of teaching strategies, provide very good support for individuals in class, and use engaging and stimulating resource material including whiteboard technology. Teaching pays very close attention to examination requirements and goes further by extending pupils' learning above and beyond those requirements; for example, in mathematics where a group of Year 11 pupils were exploring chaos theory. Purposeful and relevant homework is set and the marking of work is generally good. Assessment ensures pupils have a clear understanding of their strengths and how to improve further. Girls are encouraged to become confident, independent learners and to develop a love of learning. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons and as a result make very good progress. The school is aware that very occasionally teaching is not of the highest standard and there are a number of initiatives in place designed to secure greater consistency and share good practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers an outstanding curriculum which is reviewed regularly, is flexible, meets statutory requirements and is very well matched to the needs and interests of all pupils. There is a wide choice of subject options for older pupils, including those in the sixth form, which stimulate pupils' interest so they achieve high standards. Pupils' understanding of moral, social and health and safety issues is very well developed through citizenship lessons. The curriculum reflects the school's dual specialist status by offering greatly enhanced curricular and extra-curricular opportunities in both languages and technology. Pupils enjoy and participate fully in the excellent range of creative and sporting activities on offer. They are also enthusiastic about the numerous opportunities they have to develop their business and enterprise skills, to contribute to the community, and to develop their awareness of cultural diversity through links with other countries including those as distant as India and Madagascar. In summary, this outstanding curriculum enables the girls to become very mature and confident citizens who are prepared well for the world beyond school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are very secure. Health and well being are promoted very effectively. All girls in Years 9, 11 and 12 are interviewed individually by senior staff at option choice time. The very few requests for course change in Years 10 and 12 are evidence of the effectiveness of the guidance given. Pupils in the main school and students in the sixth are monitored very effectively and those giving cause for concern are mentored well. Parents are kept fully informed as part of this process. Support for the small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The school has excellent procedures to help pupils move from primary to secondary school and for those students who join the sixth form from other schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's contribution to the school's success is exceptional. Morale is high. Leaders at all levels are self-critical. They look for ways to improve upon the very high standards attained by the girls, to broaden and enrich their education beyond the classroom and to support and encourage them to become self-assured and independent minded. In this they succeed. There are very good systems in place for checking on how well the school is doing and for acting quickly and effectively on the rare occasions when performance dips. Equally rigorous is the monitoring of pupils' progress and the action taken to guide and encourage individuals who need support. This concern for the personal as well as academic development of every girl is pervasive throughout the school and is at the heart of its success. Planning for the future is done well and is responsive to the views of parents, pupils and all who work in the school. Teachers are specialists in their subject areas and enthusiastic. Others who work in the school are able, industrious and equally committed. There is an appropriate range of good quality resources to support girls' learning and they are used well to achieve very good value for money. The Head of the Sixth Form finds her work stimulating and exciting. Her leadership is outstanding. Governance is excellent. Governors know the school well; they fulfil their role as critical friends and play a full part in shaping its future direction. The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been built upon and the school's capacity for sustained improvement in the future is excellent.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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	
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

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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

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

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?	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	insufficient evidence

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

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Mrs Pam Barber

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9 March 2006

Dear students and pupils.

As you know, three colleagues and I recently spent two days inspecting your school. Thank you for making us so welcome and for helping us find our way around the school. May I also thank those who gave up time on Wednesday to talk to us? Your views, and those of your parents, were very helpful to us as we came to our judgements about the school. This letter is a summary of what we thought about the school.

Our view is that Lancaster Girls' Grammar is an outstanding school which benefits from an equally outstanding sixth form. We were very impressed by the superb test and examination results which reflect your commitment to hard work as well as the excellent teaching you receive. The school has an impressive culture of very high expectations in relation to your academic achievement and personal development. While you are prepared very well for examinations, the school ensures your education goes further and promotes very positive self-esteem and confidence, excellent personal skills and a very broad understanding of the world around us.

The teachers have an excellent command of their subject and often communicate this very enthusiastically. They want you to succeed and work hard to ensure you do. Your outstanding attitudes to learning and behaviour coupled with your impressive attendance record make a very significant contribution to the overall success of the school. The school provides a very wide programme of high quality extra-curricular activities to enrich your education. The leadership of the school and the sixth form are equally outstanding. The leadership provided by your headteacher, working closely with her governors and the whole staff, is exceptional.

You are rightly proud to be at this school and we wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Alan Brine HMI