



The Lancaster School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120283
LEA Leicester City
Inspection number 280785
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Cragg HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Knighton Lane East |
| School category | Community | | Leicester |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 | | Leicestershire LE2 6FU |
| Gender of pupils | Boys | Telephone number | 0116 2703176 |
| Number on roll | 1182 | Fax number | 0116 2448513 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Tony Greenwood MBE |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable | Headteacher | Mr Paul Craven |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|--|-------------------|
| 11 to 16 | 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006 | 280785 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Lancaster School is a boys 11–16 community comprehensive school serving a wide area in the south of the city of Leicester. The school has held sports specialist status since 2000 and added arts status in 2004. With 1,179 pupils on roll, it is larger than average. The school's intake is drawn from a wide range of backgrounds but over half of the pupils come from wards with significant social and economic deprivation and it has a high proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Comparatively large numbers come from minority ethnic backgrounds or are learning English as an additional language (EAL). The percentages of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and with statements of special educational needs (SEN) are above the national 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 school provides good education across the major aspects of its work. Inspectors' judgements match the school's own evaluation of its performance closely, except in the case of care, guidance and support.

Pupils join the school with attainment which is below the national average and make good progress to reach standards which are broadly average by the end of Year 11. Pupils generally have good attitudes to their lessons and respond well to working practically, in pairs and groups. Pupils' attendance, although improving, is still below the national average and this limits the achievement of some. Teaching is good. The best teaching engages pupils and involves them in a good range of activities which assist their learning. However, in a small number of lessons teaching styles and classroom management do not engage some pupils. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is broad and offers good opportunities to pupils with a wide range of needs. There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting and other activities. The school has used its specialist status effectively to develop its strength in sport, to promote English and the arts, and to raise standards. Staff are committed to the care and welfare of pupils and liaison with external agencies is a strength. The school has a strong commitment to including pupils with a variety of different needs.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear and challenging vision for the school's development that is supported by an effective senior leadership team. He has led significant change with enthusiasm. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and identifies priorities for improvement accurately. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of departments are well established but the tracking of pupils' academic progress is not yet linked sufficiently to the monitoring of their personal development. Parents generally support the school, although a small minority have concerns about the behaviour of some pupils. The school has made good improvement since its last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve pupils' attendance.
- Ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning by improving classroom management, organisation and approaches to learning in the less effective lessons.
- Continue to improve achievement by combining the tracking of pupils' academic progress with the monitoring of their personal development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of pupils is good.

Pupils enter the school with attainment which is slightly below average and well below average in English. Fewer pupils than average achieve the higher attainment levels by the end of Year 6 in primary school.

Standards have improved steadily in the last three years. By the end of Year 9, pupils achieve standards which are broadly in line with the average. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly in line with the average for all schools and above those for boys nationally. Results at GCSE in mathematics in 2005 were low but standards observed in lessons and the school's assessment data show improvement in the current year.

Pupils make good progress between Year 7 and Year 11, at a better rate than is achieved by most schools nationally. Pupils eligible for free school meals and some pupils with learning difficulties make less than average progress by the end of Year 9 but improve to make good progress by the end of Year 11. Pupils from all ethnic groups make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils are set challenging targets which most achieve successfully.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils work well together in groups and respect each other's views. Opportunities for spiritual development are sometimes missed but, in some lessons, pupils show empathy with and respect for the feelings of others. There is a strong tradition of fundraising for charity.

Most pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Where teaching is challenging and lessons are active and interesting, pupils are very involved and keen to do well. Where teaching is less effective, some pupils become distracted and lose concentration. Behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around school; many pupils are sensible and have good manners but some are boisterous. Pupils and parents report that there are some incidents of bullying and racism but that they are quickly and effectively addressed by the school. The number of exclusions has been high but is now satisfactory. Attendance rates have significantly improved but are still below the national average and rates of unauthorised absence are relatively high. Erratic attendance continues to affect the achievement of some pupils.

Personal and social education lessons make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are made well aware of safe practices and healthy lifestyles. They make an effective contribution to the school and the local community through their involvement in sport and other activities. The school council is active and has good ideas for how it can improve the school further. Pupils develop qualities and skills that will equip them well for work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The most successful teaching is characterised by teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects, by their good relationships with pupils and the clearly structured lessons, precise objectives and activities which engage the pupils. Teachers have high expectations and use a variety of teaching methods to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils make good progress and achieve standards appropriate to their prior attainment. Teaching assistants are well directed and work effectively with pupils. In the small number of less effective lessons, activities sometimes last too long, slowing down learning. Teaching styles do not always engage all the pupils in their work, leading to some losing concentration. Teachers' classroom organisation and management of behaviour in these lessons are variable.

Pupils know the level at which they are working but are not always clear how to improve their work further. Marking is regular and gives good information on the levels pupils have reached. Teachers provide comments which encourage pupils and tell them what to improve but they less frequently give advice on exactly how pupils should improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular provision is good. Significant changes in the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 have broadened choice and provided opportunities for work related learning. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and fulfils statutory requirements. There is good provision for improving pupils' literacy and basic skills. The personal and social education programme and the careers guidance programme are effective in preparing pupils for their future.

Specialist sports and arts status has contributed effectively to the raising of standards and achievement through addressing areas not traditionally successful with boys. Funding has improved facilities, including the provision of interactive whiteboards and an indoor tennis centre. A particular strength of the curriculum is the provision of extra curricular activities, particularly in sport, recreation and the arts. There are many sporting clubs and teams which achieve notable success at local and regional levels. Arts activities provide good opportunities for pupils to work together. Pupils also take opportunities to work with and perform in the community through sports coaching and supporting younger pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils learn in a generally safe and secure environment. Health and safety procedures are robust. Child protection procedures are of high quality and care for vulnerable pupils is very good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported. Effective monitoring and evaluation of pupils' behaviour and attendance through the pastoral system have led to improvements in these areas. Although senior members of staff are involved in monitoring pupils' academic achievement, tutors and heads of year have not yet been fully involved in academic monitoring and mentoring. Very effective use has been made of outside agencies and pupils are now able to access a very full range of support. Careers education is good. Pupils are well informed about their future options. Work based training and vocational courses are used well to ensure that pupils who are at risk of failing to complete their education have access to practical courses that directly link to their future careers. Although the school judged care, guidance and support to be outstanding, inspectors judge it to be good because the pastoral system is not yet used effectively to improve academic standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school, including its governance, are good. The headteacher leads the school with vision and energy. The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the school's main strengths and weaknesses derived from its good self-evaluation process. The views of parents and pupils are regularly sought and acted upon. Senior staff and subject leaders have a clear sense of purpose. Their priority is to raise all pupils' achievement and standards through the improvement of teaching and learning.

The improved use of performance management has changed the culture of the school. Departmental reviews, direct observation in the classroom and the sharing of best practice are all making a positive contribution to improvement. These processes have successfully engaged teachers in their own professional development. The strategy for school improvement and cycle of planning is good.

Senior staff have clear responsibilities and know their precise role in moving the school forward. Middle managers continue to raise standards within their subject areas through regular lesson observations and other evaluations which are increasingly rigorous. The school uses data from the analysis of pupils' performance well but, as yet, makes insufficient use of such information to help individual pupils improve.

The school manages its finances and resources effectively. Both staffing and accommodation are generally appropriate to the school's needs. The school benefits from the close and critical support given by the governing body. The evidence of this inspection confirms the school's judgement that there has been improvement since the last inspection. The good improvement, particularly in standards in the last three

years, confirms that the leadership and management of the school have good capacity to bring about further improvement.

Inspection judgements

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|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <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 | 3 | 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? | 3 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 4 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 | 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? | 2 | 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

Dear Pupils

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your cooperation and assistance during our visit. We greatly appreciated your comments and opinions.

The inspection found that yours is a good school. You are set challenging targets and mostly achieve them. Results of tests in Year 9 and examinations in Year 11 are improving and are at least in line with the national average. You make generally good progress from when you join the school in Year 7. Most of you have good attitudes to your lessons and behave well. The school provides a wide range of courses for you to choose from and careers education is good. There is a good range of sporting and other activities in which you have done well both locally and nationally. There is good support for you, particularly for those of you who find learning difficult. The school is well led and managed.

There are some aspects of the school's work that can be improved. We feel that, although your attendance has improved, there are still some pupils who need to attend regularly to make the most of their time at school. Some lessons need to have more structure and a greater variety of activities to keep your interest and help you to learn effectively. We feel that subject staff and pastoral staff can work more closely together to ensure that your progress is monitored regularly and that you get the right sort of support, when you need it, to achieve well.

We are confident that your school can continue to improve, particularly as some of the changes made in the last two years become more established. We wish you well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Cragg Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools