



Langtree School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123246
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281442
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mary Ryan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Woodcote
School category	Community		Reading
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		RG8 0RA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01491 680514
Number on roll	521	Fax number	01491 682411
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Anthony Booth
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Rick Holroyd

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 281442
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Langtree School is a small and growing mixed comprehensive school situated in Woodcote, a large residential village in Oxfordshire. It serves surrounding villages and the northern outskirts of Reading. The current headteacher took up post in January 2005, succeeding three headteachers in the previous four years. The attainment of students on entry to the school is above average. Twenty per cent of students are on the SEN register and 3.8% have statements of special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low and there are currently no students on roll whose first language is not English. The school has good links with local primary schools and has established a partnership with Henley College to secure an appropriate 14-19 curriculum. It has recently submitted an application for specialist status as a college for the performing arts.

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 sees itself as a good school and inspectors agree. However, both the school and the inspection team judge that the school could improve still further. With the appointment of the current headteacher in January 2005, the school has moved into a new and dynamic phase of development. Educational provision in Years 7 to 11 is good overall. Standards are above national averages and most students make good progress. However, some boys do not achieve well enough. Teaching and learning are also good overall, but the quality varies between lessons. Students enjoy school and the vast majority show good attitudes to their work and behave well. The care and support for students are good but some parents, staff and students have concerns about the behaviour of a small minority of students. The headteacher has articulated a strong vision for the school, which is shared by students, staff and governors. At its heart is the emphasis on learning, teaching and even higher achievement for all students. Improvement since the last inspection was slow initially but has accelerated in the last year. Strategies have been put in place to strengthen leadership and management and to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the work of the school; some of these strategies have already made an impact. Given the swift progress that has been made recently, the school has demonstrated that its capacity to improve further is now good. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Establish and implement rigorous systems in every subject area to track and monitor the progress of all groups of students. * Ensure that the new systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate how well the school is doing are implemented consistently at all levels in order to improve the quality of education for students. * Respond to the concerns of some parents, staff and students, by developing further and applying consistently the school's policies on positive behaviour for learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are above average and progress for most groups of students is good. Rates of progress from ages 11 to 14 have improved significantly in recent years although, until recently, progress slowed between the ages of 14 and 16. Provisional data for 2005 indicate that rates of progress continue to improve, although the school has not yet met the targets that it set for itself. Achievement in vocational courses is variable. Girls make particularly good progress, but that of boys lags behind and has rightly been identified by the school as an area for further improvement. The school has set in place some good strategies intended to raise attainment. These include a wider range of teaching strategies, better analysis of examination performance and mentoring to support targeted groups of students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They attend school regularly, show interest in their lessons and enjoy their education. They work well in pairs and in small groups, and generally contribute confidently to class discussions. Students feel safe at school because the majority behave well and act responsibly and maturely. However, some parents and members of the student council have expressed concern that the unacceptable behaviour of a very small minority of students in some lessons, adversely affects the progress of their peers. Inspectors found that, whilst their concerns are justified, there were very few lessons where poor behaviour affected students' learning. Although more students have been excluded as a result of poor behaviour during the past year, the number of exclusions overall has fallen steadily since the last inspection. Relationships among learners are good. The students' willingness to take responsibility is impressive; the student council takes its role seriously and has been responsible for several improvements, including, for example, changes to school uniform and lunchtime arrangements for students. The teachers' evident respect for students and the civilised atmosphere in the school have a beneficial effect upon students' social development. Students, on the whole, show consideration for others, but a few students do not show sufficient respect for the rights of others. Students' spiritual development is evident in their appreciation of the arts and in their growth in self-confidence, although teachers miss opportunities to provide time for private reflection during assemblies and in tutor time. Many activities, including sport, and an emphasis on healthy eating encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles. They respect other cultures and there are opportunities for them to develop knowledge about the cultural diversities of our society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school believes the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory. Inspectors judge it to be good but lacking in consistency. Most lessons are planned well and students are clear about what they are expected to learn. There are very good relationships between teachers and students which promote positive attitudes to learning. In the best lessons teachers routinely adapt their teaching styles to the different capabilities of the students. The most able students are identified and teachers provide them with appropriate challenge. Teachers are acutely aware of the needs of those students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and high expectations, both of learning and behaviour, ensure that students make good progress. Assessment for learning has not yet become an integral part of the planning in all subjects but students are increasingly being told how they can improve their standards and many are expected to evaluate their own and others' work. The quality of assessment is strongest in mathematics and science where students' progress is tracked so that individual targets can be set. The school has recently introduced effective supportive

systems to intervene when standards or progress are not as high as they should be. The success of this is demonstrated by the improvement in standards in 2005. Procedures for the systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching are in place but are at an early stage of development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that curricular provision is good. It satisfies statutory requirements and goes a long way to meeting the varied needs of the students. In Key Stage 3 the most able linguists can study both French and German and there is a very good range of options for those wishing to learn a musical instrument. As a consequence a high proportion has chosen to do so. The school's focus on the performing arts has led to the provision in Key Stage 3 of additional time for drama and a course in Art and ICT. In Key Stage 4 the curriculum is largely academic but the school has fostered links with other institutions in order to cater for students who would benefit from vocational courses such as engineering and health and social care. However, students' progress in some of these courses is poorly monitored. The most able mathematicians study statistics in Year 10 and Key Stage 4 pupils are prepared well for future employment by their work experience of which they speak highly. In addition the school provides a wide range of enrichment activities in art, ICT, design technology and languages and there is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities which include sport, music and drama. Pupils have excellent opportunities to take part in residential experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school evaluates the quality of care, guidance and support as good. Inspectors agree with this judgement. All requirements for child protection are in place, and members of staff are aware of the procedures. Students feel safe and are well supported by staff because, although there are some incidents of bullying, these are usually dealt with effectively. Students in Year 9 are well prepared for selecting and meeting the demands of new courses in Key Stage 4. Year 11 students are given good advice in preparation for work and the sixth form. The support for students with learning difficulties is a strength of the school. However the procedures for tracking the progress of pupils against targets is inconsistent. In some curriculum areas, such as mathematics and science, tracking is well developed, but in others, such as English, it is in the early stages of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. This judgement confirms the school's own self assessment and reflects the several changes in school leadership over the last four years. Progress in addressing the issues identified for improvement

in the previous inspection report was slow initially, but steps have now been taken to implement the necessary developments and changes. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses. Its capacity to improve further is now good. A particular strength is in the vision and leadership of the headteacher. He has established quickly the direction for the school, emphasising high aspirations to raise further students' achievement. The commitment to 'putting learning first' now drives whole-school and department planning and has led to the introduction of more focused strategies to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Together, the senior leadership team have worked effectively to begin to implement a number of changes and have the capacity to take forward these developments. The leadership of middle managers is more variable; in some cases it is good. The new and more rigorous systems and structures to evaluate and monitor pupil performance and inform departmental planning now support subject leaders in raising expectations and performance and are beginning to be used across the school. Teaching and support staff are committed to the new developments and middle managers are increasingly supported in developing their leadership role. The school involves parents, students, staff and governors in reviewing its work and plans to extend this consultation further. Financial planning and monitoring have improved and are now good. After a period of financial restriction, the number on roll has increased and the school has recently agreed a plan with the local authority to move out of a deficit budget within three years. While retaining its firm commitment to small class sizes, the school is creative in using funding from a range of sources to enhance its educational provision and to invest in improving the learning environment. Procedures to monitor budgets have been tightened and budget holders are now held more firmly to account. The governing body has recently reviewed its structures and practices and despite recent changes in membership, is now better placed to drive the school's development and challenge its performance. The chair of governors is highly committed to the school and provides good support to the headteacher and senior staff.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	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	1	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

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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	2	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

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

As you know we visited your school recently. Thank you for the welcome and courtesy you showed us. We appreciate the help many of you gave us by talking about your work and sharing your views about the school. We are pleased that you enjoy being at the school. We found that most of you are making good progress in your studies.

What we think your school does well: * the school supports you very well in your personal development; you have good attitudes, show consideration for each other, are polite and want to work hard * the headteacher and his senior team have a clear vision for the future development of the school and they have the ability to make further improvements * standards are high and have recently risen in Years 10 and 11 * in most of your lessons teachers and teaching assistants work hard to provide you with interesting and stimulating lessons and support you when you find subjects difficult * you are provided with a good range of subjects and courses and also a good variety of activities at lunchtime and after school, including the opportunity to enjoy residential experiences * staff take good care of you; they enable you to grow in your understanding of how to stay safe, live healthy lifestyles and contribute to the community * the school council works well and gives you a chance to have your say about what can be improved.

We have asked the school to do the following things: * enable you to make faster progress by keeping a closer check in all subjects on what you have already learned and setting high expectations of what you will learn next * improve the ways in which all members of the school judge the quality of their work, what needs to be improved and how they contribute to that improvement * ensure that the concerns expressed to us by some of you and your parents, about the behaviour of a small number of students who make it difficult for others to learn, are tackled. Many of you told us that you feel the school is a good school. We agree, but we also agree with your headteacher, teachers and governors that it could improve still further to ensure that you achieve the very best of which you are capable. We wish you all the very best for your own futures and for the future of the school.