



The Lacon Childe School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123578
LEA Shropshire
Inspection number 281510
Inspection dates 4 May 2006 to 5 May 2006
Reporting inspector Edward Wheatley AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Love Lane
School category	Community		Kidderminster
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Worcestershire DY14 8PE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01299 270312
Number on roll	568	Fax number	01299 271037
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Clare Ratcliff
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr Allan Gilhooley

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	4 May 2006 - 5 May 2006	281510

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Lacon Childe School is a small comprehensive school and specialist sports college. The school serves a wide area, including several villages and the edges of nearby towns. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds, though the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and none is in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average and attainment on entry to the school is currently average though varies.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many strengths. The headteacher provides excellent direction for development and the great majority of staff are committed to further improvement. The school's self-evaluation procedures are good and improving with increasing involvement of all staff. Inspectors' judgments match the school's evaluation of itself. The school has improved since it was last inspected and gives good value for money. The capacity for further improvement is good. Standards are above average and pupils make good progress, especially in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, though it is good in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and design and technology. Procedures to deal with underachievement are starting to have a positive effect, especially in science. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good and sometimes excellent progress due to good teaching and extremely good support. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Lessons are well planned and mostly well matched to pupils' needs. Assessment information is used well to set targets so that pupils know what grades they should be aiming for. However, marking is not consistently good with some giving little guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, though provision for religious education, whilst improved since the last inspection, still does not fully meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' personal development is good. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good, their attendance is good and they make an excellent contribution to the community, but ineffective coordination of opportunities to raise their awareness of multicultural issues means that this aspect is less well developed. Care, support and guidance are good and excellent links with a wide range of external agencies provide particularly strong support for vulnerable pupils. The contribution made by the specialist sports college is very good. It is playing a significant part in developing assessment skills, improving teaching, widening the curriculum and improving community links.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure marking consistently informs pupils about how well they perform and how to do better.
- Ensure that statutory requirements for religious education are fully met in Years 10 and 11.
- Coordinate its programme of opportunities for pupils to find out about the different cultures found in Britain today

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average in all year groups and achievement is good. In Years 7 to 9, pupils make good progress from average standards on entry, and a small but significant proportion reach well above average standards. The 2005 Year 9 national test results reflect an improving trend over recent years. Improvement in mathematics was particularly impressive. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make adequate progress overall,

though many make good progress. The 2005 GCSE results were particularly good in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, ICT, art and design and design and technology but there was some underachievement in science, history and geography, particularly among average attaining pupils. Improved use of assessment information for the process of setting targets and lesson planning is already leading to improved progress, especially in science. There is effective work to raise standards in the school. For example, work in English with a writer in residence (the author of 'Country Diary' in a national newspaper) led the writer to justifiably state that 'every fungus, stone and mossy clump was interrogated and their (pupils') writing tore into their experience with astounding and sometimes beautiful insight'. In addition, work with the sports college is playing an important part in raising standards by engaging teachers in using assessment information to set targets and plan lessons, and to have clear learning objectives for their lessons. The school's targets are challenging, and for the most part they have been met. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their learning targets and receive particularly good help from learning support assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their social and moral outlook is very good but their spiritual development is satisfactory because there are not enough opportunities to extend this. Pupils gain a sound grasp of culture through art, music and dance in physical education, but their awareness of the multicultural make-up of modern Britain is not developed well enough. Pupils enjoy coming to school and join in the activities on offer enthusiastically. Attendance is good. Behaviour is very good, and pupils respond well to the school's light touch supervision at breaktimes, being trusted to stay indoors without incident. Pupils are polite, considerate and concentrate well in lessons. There are many instances where stronger pupils support weaker ones, showing that the school's caring nature is taking root in its pupils, with very positive attitudes to learning and the school community. Pupils appreciate having a voice in school affairs through the school council and drop-in centres, although not all parents are aware that these are now well established. Pupils are well versed in safety procedures in science, design and technology and physical education. They know well how to keep themselves safe. Pupils like the move to healthy lifestyle, diet and exercise; exercise and fitness are popular, but healthy eating is slower to catch on. Their involvement in the community is excellent, with close links with local organisations and strong contributions to local, national and international charities. Pupils are, rightly, certain that the school prepares them well for their further education and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and frequently very good. Much teaching is challenging and fast paced, using a good range of resources. ICT is used effectively to increase pupils' independent learning skills and to motivate and interest pupils. Challenging teaching encourages very positive attitudes which contribute significantly to pupils' good learning. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to work together, engaging cooperatively in activities such as peer and self-evaluation. Lessons are well planned and improving as a result of inter-departmental cooperation and the sports college work with staff to improve the use of assessment information and lesson learning objectives. This is leading to the consistent setting of targets for pupils and lessons where work is closely matched to pupils' learning needs. However, marking varies in quality. Some good practice exists, for example, in English and physical education, but not all marking focuses enough on informing pupils how to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from good identification and very good support, which enables them to achieve well. Able pupils are well challenged, for instance, through good questioning and high expectations of independent learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Provision for religious education is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Although it has improved and is now good in Years 7 to 9, and there is an optional GCSE course, provision for other pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good with curriculum modifications that challenge and support these pupils well. Vocational options are limited and mostly provided through other institutions. The school monitors off-site participants' progress well and pupils achieve well in the one school-based vocational course in art and design. Personal, health and social education (PHSE), citizenship and other subjects educate pupils well about how to stay safe, though healthy eating is not yet promoted well enough. Fitness is very well developed through a very good programme of physical activities organised through the sports college. Extracurricular provision is very good with a high level of staff involvement in activities which create great enjoyment for pupils and very good personal development. Pupils' preparation for working life is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and central to the school's work. Pupils have clear academic targets, receive good guidance to help them make choices of course options, and receive valuable advice about possible career choices and their next steps

in education. The staff are well acquainted with the school's effective systems for child protection and the school's risk assessment and health and safety procedures are good. Bullying and racist issues are dealt with effectively and pupils are actively involved in supporting the school's approach to dealing with them. The school has good systems to support pupils, and has excellent organised access to a wide range of external agencies to support the curriculum as well as to deal with the personal needs of individual pupils. All staff, including year staff are readily available to pupils. The school is particularly sensitive to the needs of its most vulnerable pupils. The exemplary support and encouragement they give enables pupils to maintain a very positive self-image and a willingness to persevere when they meet difficulties. Staff train pupils in effective personal organisation, enabling them to tackle their work with confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher gives outstanding direction for improvement. The headteacher and senior staff have a very good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further, a view that is shared by the great majority of staff. There is a clear focus on ensuring all pupils receive the best opportunities. The quality of self-evaluation is good and improving as more staff realise the value of lesson observation and sharing good practice to raise standards even further. Heads of department are mostly effective subject leaders and increasingly involved in implementing whole-school policies on assessment, the process of setting targets, teaching and learning. Their own evaluations of departmental performance and areas for improvement are frequently perceptive and improving. The majority of parents are pleased with the school. Some feel that the school does not listen to their views, but the inspection team found the school to be open and receptive to the views of parents. Overall governance is satisfactory. Governors are well informed, challenge the school and support it in its improvement planning. However, they have not ensured that religious education is taught to the depth required by statutory requirement, which was also an issue at the last inspection. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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?	1	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	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	1	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?	3	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	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

Dear Pupils Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. You made our time most enjoyable and gave us a lot of information. Many of you spoke to us about the school and helped us when we needed it. We met with the school council and others on particular courses. The information you gave us and the comments you made were very helpful. The best things about your school are

- You achieve well overall and many of you achieve very well.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are very good and you work hard.
- Most of the teaching is good and some is excellent.
- The headteacher gives excellent leadership; all other staff work hard to make sure all of your learning needs are met.
- The school has good and improving systems to check how well you do and to improve its performance.
- It is a safe, secure place to learn in. We are suggesting to your school that governors and staff should now
- Make sure that marking always tells you how well you do and how to do better.
- Make sure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught religious education in the way required by law.
- Provide an organised programme of work for you to find out about the different cultures found in Britain today.

With best wishes Mr T Wheatley (Lead Inspector)