



Leek High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124406
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281714
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Gwendoline Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Springfield Road
School category	Community		Leek
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Staffordshire ST13 6EU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01538 483036
Number on roll	520	Fax number	01538 483052
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Eileen Murfin
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Ms Judy Samuel

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
13 to 18	22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	281714

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Leek High Specialist Technology School is a 13 to 18 years of age mixed community comprehensive school, which gained specialist technology school status in September 2004. The number of students on roll is smaller than average, with 531 in total, of which 126 are in the sixth form, and there are very few students from minority ethnic groups. Most of its students come either from a local area of some social and economic deprivation or from isolated rural areas.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence indicates that the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory; the school judged its overall effectiveness to be good.

The school uses its resources effectively to offer satisfactory value for money. It works well in partnership with others in order to promote students' well-being. This is evident in the transition work it does with its feeder school and the vocational curriculum it provides in partnership with local colleges. Its involvement in developing extended school services in partnership with other schools in the area demonstrates its commitment to providing opportunities for its students and the local community. Its status as a specialist technology school is beginning to have a significant impact on teaching and learning as a result of the good use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Standards reached by students are broadly average but few students achieve the higher grades. The progress of students at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory and is now satisfactory in the sixth form as a result of improved tracking systems. Teaching is satisfactory but the quality of feedback on students' work and the precision of teachers' target setting are uneven. The curriculum and care, guidance and support offered to students are good and ensure that they are prepared well for adult working life. Behaviour overall is satisfactory but that of some students both in lessons and around the school is not always acceptable.

Leadership and management in the school are satisfactory. Effective steps have been taken to address points for improvement raised in the last inspection. The headteacher and her leadership team understand clearly what needs to be done to move the school forward and have ensured that the school has the capacity to improve. Recent strategies, for example in relation to the monitoring of learners' performance and support for students in danger of underachieving, are beginning to have a positive impact. The school benefits from a very well informed and committed governing body.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Standards at GCE AS and A-level are broadly average. Although progress overall in 2005 was unsatisfactory, measures are now in place whose impact on progress was evident during the inspection. For example, as a result of more careful and focused tracking, progress in many subjects and for the majority of students is now on or, in some cases, above target, particularly in Year 12. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory but monitoring of how effectively students use their study periods is limited. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers know their subjects and their students well, but do not consistently promote active learning. The wide curriculum matches students' needs and aspirations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of students in the sixth form by monitoring and tracking their progress, promoting active learning and ensuring that study periods are used effectively.
- Raise the achievement of potentially high attaining students in Years 10 and 11 by continuing the developments already in place to provide additional support and raise expectations.
- Improve the quality of feedback so that all students are clear about how to improve their work through precise targets.
- Raise expectations about students' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the school overall, the achievement of students is satisfactory and the standards they reach are broadly average. Students enter the school at 13 years of age with prior attainment that in some years is below average but in 2005 was broadly average. Students follow the condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum and two thirds of them take their national tests in a middle school prior to joining Leek High Specialist Technology School, although as yet, there is no evidence of the relative performance of each group at Key Stage 4. Students make satisfactory progress between Key Stages 2 and 3 and between Key Stages 3 and 4. There are no significant variations between any groups of students. Progress has been weaker in mathematics and, after thorough analysis of possible causes, the school has introduced effective strategies to improve the progress of all students in mathematics, as well as those with the potential to achieve the highest grades. Year 11 students attained broadly average results in their GCSE courses in 2005, although few students gained passes at the highest grades. The standards reached by sixth form students in their GCE AS and A-level courses are broadly average and their progress is now satisfactory as a result of the introduction of improved monitoring and tracking procedures. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also satisfactory. Opportunities to provide reflection and to enhance spiritual development in school assemblies are sometimes missed and opportunities to develop an understanding of other cultures are limited. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. During the inspection, good attitudes and behaviour reflected good teaching but around the school and during unsupervised time, behaviour is inconsistent. Many students are polite and consider the needs of others but a significant number of students are less sensitive. Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good because the school has implemented successful strategies. The school is working hard to encourage better punctuality during the school day. Students gain a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities through the school council, where issues such as the quality of

school lunches are discussed and actions taken. Any known instances of bullying are dealt with effectively and safety awareness and healthy lifestyles are promoted. There are strong links with the local community and feeder schools. Students enjoy school and feel safe and secure because relationships are good. Opportunities for students to experience work placements are good and they make good progress developing skills for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is usually well planned, with clear purpose and pace. Attention is given to students' particular needs, including those with learning difficulties. The school is focused on improving the quality of teaching. Strategies are being developed to spread the practices of the strongest departments across the school by encouraging the active involvement of students in lessons and by making the evaluation of the impact of teaching more rigorous and sharp. The benefits of specialist technology status are clear in the good use of ICT to shape and accelerate learning. Similarly the use of assessment to promote students' progress is clear in the most successful teaching, where students are shown what they need to do to improve their work and their grades. Most students, although not all, know the level at which they are working through regular marking. However the quality of feedback and precision of teachers' target-setting is uneven. All teaching observed was satisfactory or better. However, in some lessons, high expectations were not clearly communicated and students were more passive. In such lessons there was a comparative lack of commitment, enjoyment and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for the main school and the sixth form is good. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met. There is strong and effective collaboration with the partner middle school to spread the benefits of technology status in mathematics and ICT and in relation to the innovative condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum. Similarly, close liaison with the local further education and agricultural colleges ensures a full range of academic, vocational and work related opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The curriculum therefore matches students' needs, aptitudes and aspirations well. Every effort is made to encourage students to stay in education, including those in danger of becoming disaffected, through creative and well-judged arrangements such as the Year 11 project provision. Additionally there are extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and the performing arts, which are popular and add greatly to students' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Care, guidance and support are good overall. All child protection, health, safety and risk assessments are in place and are reviewed regularly. Students needing additional care are very well supported. Provision for students to discuss their concerns with the school nurse and community workers is good, and there are good links with support agencies, parents and carers. The new sports facilities and staffing have led to improved opportunities for students to take part in physical activity. Although the canteen offers a range of healthy eating options, too many students still make unhealthy choices. All students receive helpful guidance and advice when deciding on courses and their future careers. There are good procedures to check on students' progress but there is inconsistent use of information to ensure a close match of work to ability across subject areas. Monitoring of how effectively sixth form students use their study periods is limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and its self-evaluation is satisfactory. It has set clear priorities for improvement at each key stage and these are beginning to show positive results.

Significant changes have been made since the last inspection, especially in relation to leadership and management at subject level. The school's leadership team have a clear view of the performance of different subject areas and are taking appropriate steps to improve accountability and consistency and to encourage the sharing of good practice. The leadership team make accurate judgements about the quality of lessons. Strategies to improve teaching and learning across subjects and year groups have been introduced and these are beginning to have a positive impact.

The leadership team, strengthened by new appointments, is ensuring that the school has the capacity to improve and is putting in place structures and strategies to promote and sustain this. It has created a common sense of purpose among staff and there is a shared vision for the school in relation to its commitment to, and aspirations for, its students and the local community, and its status as a specialist technology school.

The leadership of the school ensures that resources are employed well to offer value for money. The successful achievement of specialist technology school status has enabled the introduction of extensive ICT equipment and additional staffing that is effectively supporting learning throughout the school.

The school benefits from a very well informed governing body that is strongly committed to the school and fully involved in decisions about its strategic development.

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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

Thank you for your welcoming attitude during our visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers. Your comments helped us to get a clear understanding of what it is like to be a pupil at your school.

Your school has good relationships with other organisations that benefit you. It does a lot of work to help you move successfully from middle school and offers you suitable vocational courses in partnership with Leek College and Rodbaston College.

You make satisfactory progress in your education and your results at GCSE and at AS and A-level are average. Those of you with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The better use of ICT in many of your lessons is the result of the school's specialist technology school status. Ways of encouraging you to achieve the highest grades at GCSE have been introduced and these must continue. Most of you know how well you are doing in your subjects but the quality of feedback that you get on your work and information on what you should do to improve it are uneven. Your teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and know you well but their lessons do not always actively involve you. Monitoring the performance of those of you in sixth form needs to be developed further and the school needs to be sure that you are using your study periods effectively.

Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good but you could help your school by ensuring that you arrive on time for lessons during the day and by improving your behaviour both in lessons and around the school.

Although the canteen offers a range of healthy eating options, too many of you still choose to eat unhealthily. You enjoy school and feel safe and secure because relationships with your teachers are good. The school provides good opportunities for you to discuss any worries you have with appropriate adults. All of you receive helpful guidance and advice when deciding on courses and your future careers and the school prepares you well for adult working life.