

Lordswood Boys' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103484
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286675
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	612
6th form	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Judges
Headteacher	Hayden Abbott
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Hagley Road Birmingham B17 8BJ
Telephone number	0121 4642837
Fax number	0121 4642746

Age group	11-18
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Inspection number	286675

© Crown copyright 2007

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lordswood Boys' School is smaller than most secondary schools. It makes sixth form provision in partnership with four other local schools. It became a specialist school for sports in September 2004. The great majority of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with Indian, Pakistani and Caribbean pupils forming the largest groups, and many other groups represented. For many pupils English is an additional language but few are at an early stage in learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

The school has experienced some significant staff changes within the leadership team and teaching staff in recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Lordswood Boys' School is a harmonious, inclusive and welcoming community where different cultures are respected and relationships between pupils and staff are strong. It is a satisfactory and improving school with many strong features. Staff know pupils very well and are sensitive to their needs. Effective systems are in place to support vulnerable pupils to provide good care, guidance and support. Pupils very much value the support they receive and speak very positively about improvements and opportunities to extend their experiences such as through the cadets, residential visits, study support, and a range of innovative and challenging activities. Pupils' personal development is good. They have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Pupils of all ages express their views confidently. They feel safe and have confidence that staff will deal with any incidents rapidly. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as peer and sports mentors, prefects and council representatives which make a good contribution to the community. These features are supported by the house system which provides healthy competition and good opportunities for social and leadership development, which pupils enjoy. Strong partnerships have grown and continue to develop including international links with Pakistan and Africa. Pupils are enthusiastic about these links which raise their aspirations and cultural awareness. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, and they demonstrate an outstanding cultural awareness and tolerance of other faiths and traditions.

The strength of the curriculum is the sports specialism. It has been the catalyst for change. Sport undoubtedly pervades the whole school. It does not simply extend opportunities and promote improvement in sport itself, but works on projects with other subjects, links participation with behaviour, and provides a focus for high standards of discipline and inclusion. The curriculum is good and provides vibrant and successful vocational choices in Key Stage 4 to meet the needs and interests of pupils.

Despite a challenging period of staff changes, including senior staff, satisfactory leadership and management have led to improvements in standards and achievement. Achievement is satisfactory overall but there are differences between key stages which have reflected the school's priority on older learners. Standards in Key Stage 3 have been below national average in recent years. In 2006 pupils made better progress in English than mathematics and science and although the school met its targets they were not sufficiently challenging based on pupils' attainment on entry. In Key Stage 4, 51% of pupils achieved five or more GCSE high grade passes. Good achievement in art, drama, physical education and uniform services supported the school's performance. All pupils left with some form of accreditation demonstrating the inclusive nature of the school. Standards in a number of subjects including English and mathematics were below national average and pupils did not make the progress expected. This resulted from inconsistencies in teaching, management and staff turnover.

Staffing is now more stable and there are effective systems in place to check progress. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good and outstanding teaching. The school has an accurate view of teaching and has effective systems for observing the quality of lessons. The impact of this is not yet increasing the proportion of good or better lessons in order to improve rates of progress consistently across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection standards and achievement have improved. Improvements in the monitoring of progress and intervention for underperforming pupils have increased the school's

capacity for raising standards and achievement further. The growing strength of the school's senior and middle leaders and strong input from governors demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

A small proportion of the schools, where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which has areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Standards on entry to the sixth form are below that expected nationally but from these starting points students make good progress overall. Pass rates are high and students remain committed to complete their courses. Standards on AS- and A-level courses were broadly average in 2006, an improvement on 2005. Standards are rising because there is a more rigorous approach to enrolment to ensure students are on courses appropriate to their abilities. There is recognition that the curriculum is satisfactory and needs to develop further through the partnership to improve progression opportunities for students, and value for money.

Teaching is good and well monitored through lesson observation leading to better student progress. The students themselves are unanimous in expressing their appreciation of the good individual care and support they receive from teachers and tutors who know them well. Students' personal development is good and they contribute very well to the main school community. Leadership and management in the sixth form are both good as the strategies employed in the main school such as the monitoring of progress are already making an impact. This is evident in the rising standards of attainment and good achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in English and mathematics, and the impact of cross-curricular literacy and numeracy.
- Make better use of assessment information to set challenging targets to improve pupils' progress.
- Improve the proportion of good or better lessons to engage pupils and promote independence.
- In collaboration with partner schools develop more flexible curricular provision in the sixth form to meet the needs of students more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

By the end of Year 9 standards have been below the national average but have been rising. With greater stability of staffing the progress pupils are making from their entry to the school in Year 7 is beginning to improve through closer monitoring of pupils' targets. However, the targets are not sufficiently challenging to demonstrate good progress.

Although the school achieved the best GCSE results in 2006, exceeding its target, leaders acknowledge that improvements must be made in English and mathematics given the impact on pupils' economic well-being. Tracking systems are now identifying pupils at risk of underperforming. Pupils benefit from a range of strategies to support their achievement

including mentoring, study support, target-setting days and off-site events. Current data are showing that pupils are responding well to this support and improving their achievements.

The school has identified that Pakistani pupils do not perform as well as other groups and this has become a focus for the school. Changes within the curriculum, regular checks, mentoring and catch-up sessions are beginning to influence progress. Parents have also attended sessions to work alongside their children to help them study and to learn about the demand of courses.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and benefit from the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good in the main school and good in the sixth form. Pupils enjoy school which is reflected in their good attitudes and in their improved attendance which is now in line with national levels. Behaviour around the site is good and in lessons, even when pupils are not fully motivated by the teaching. Pupils recognise the fairness of the school's use of sanctions and rewards so that they feel respected and supported. Pupils are very good at accepting responsibility and Year 11 pupils display great maturity in carrying out their duties as prefects. They appreciate the trust shown in them and respond positively. All pupils benefit from work experience and a curriculum which promotes workplace skills. Pupils have some weaknesses in the key skills of literacy and numeracy, necessary for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Teaching is best where there is a clear focus for the lesson, with clear planning and effective classroom management. Behaviour in lessons is generally good; pupils say that they enjoy lessons and are complimentary about teachers' high expectations. There is often a good rapport with pupils especially when there are opportunities for discussion and practical learning. Lessons that challenge pupils' thinking, as observed in religious education and history, enable them to reach high level conclusions. Weaker lessons do not allow enough time to develop ideas and oral skills, or to develop independent learning. They are over directed by the teacher with few opportunities for pupils to take initiative or extend their key skills. The tracking of pupils' progress is developing and most pupils are aware of their targets. In Year 11 there are some good examples of where this information is being used to promote improvement and high expectations. Some books, however, do not contain enough information to support progress.

In the sixth form, challenge and high expectations result in students making large intellectual strides, as seen in a chemistry lesson observed, where students made good progress because they were able to work independently and together to solve problems.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum and other activities are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The school has responded to the recommendations made in the last report by adjusting the timing of lessons and the school week. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils in the main school very well. The school promotes a personalised curriculum at Key Stage 4 and allows pupils to follow different pathways according to their aspirations. All pupils have the opportunity to study at least one vocational subject and German. Provision is made for gifted and talented pupils to take examinations early, and to pick up new courses. Pupils at risk of exclusion receive a tailored off-site programme by senior staff and as a result they achieve some accreditation by the end of Year 11.

Pupils receive good advice about planning their future throughout the school.

Summer schools are successful, and the provision of classes at weekends is popular with parents and helps to keep pupils on track. Good use is made of educational visits and visitors to extend pupils' experiences. There are high levels of participation in all of these activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Provision for care, guidance and support is good overall. It is good in the sixth form where the tutor sessions play a significant role. Pupils are loyal to the school so they develop positive attitudes to learning. The school works hard to make the environment attractive and stimulating with good quality art work by pupils. Despite this many areas require investment to provide a quality learning environment. The school promotes pupils' health and ensures their safety. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are thorough and the school works well with other agencies. Pupils are well informed about education and career options and the majority continue into some form of further education. The school communicates well with all parents, especially those of vulnerable pupils or those with learning difficulties. The support offered by senior staff to disaffected pupils is outstanding. The inclusion policy has greatly reduced the number of exclusions. The school has made effective and sustained efforts to combat bullying and pupils confirm that they feel safe. The school is good at sharing with pupils and parents a clear understanding of individual attainment and personal targets. However, marking and feedback in lessons do not always provide pupils with specific guidance about how to improve their work and achieve their targets. Academic guidance is good in the sixth form with individual reviews leading to a better focused approach to study and improved progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and clear direction for the school with a relentless and passionate focus on achievement. This has meant that despite a difficult period

of change standards and achievement have improved. The decision to become a specialist sports school has been influential and contributed greatly to the ethos and community spirit within the school.

The headteacher is well supported by an increasingly effective leadership team and together they have an open and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A particular strength is the departmental review process undertaken by the senior team to assess effectiveness. This results in a report with a sharp focus on areas for improvement. Middle leaders also undertake quality assurance activities and are developing their capacity to make effective and consistent use of assessment information. Senior leaders recognise that this is a key area if the school is to set and reach challenging targets for each pupil.

School and department improvement plans identify the key priorities for development. However, plans do not always focus sufficiently on the precise steps needed to make improvements or detail the ways progress will be measured or evaluated, such as the plan for literacy.

The governing body is well informed and works effectively in partnership with the senior leadership team. It supports and challenges the school very well and has good links with the local community. Governors understand the issues facing the school, and have a firm commitment to fulfilling the potential of every pupil.

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.

Annex A

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?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	3	

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lordswood Boys' School, Birmingham, B17 8BJ

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when we came to inspect your school recently. We were very impressed with how you all got along and supported each other. You told us how much the school has improved in recent years and the ways that becoming a specialist sports school has provided many more opportunities and activities which you enjoy.

Staff work very hard to create a safe environment for you and to support you in achieving your best. This often means that they are giving up their time after school and at weekends to help you to be successful young men. We were very pleased to hear how much you appreciate this and value the good relationships you have with staff. It was clear that you take responsibility in school through the school council to suggest improvements, as prefects, mentors and house representatives. You told us how this helped with confidence, leadership, relationships and teamwork.

Lordswood is providing a satisfactory and improving education, and there are many achievements to celebrate. It is an inclusive school where the many cultures represented are respected. It was a great achievement for you to win the competition about Pakistan. The link sounds very exciting and we hope that many of you will become involved.

Standards and achievements have been improving in recent years but we believe that they can be even higher, especially in English and mathematics. We have recommended that the school makes sure that the targets you have are challenging and will help you to make good progress. To support this we have suggested that there are more lessons planned where you can be actively involved in your learning, with opportunities for paired, group, practical and independent work.

The sixth form at Lordswood is good and students told us that they appreciate the support they receive from tutors and teachers. It was good to see how much you were involved in the main school. We recommended that the school should continue to work with the partner schools in the area to provide more course choices to meet your interests and future plans.

You, yourselves, can help by thinking about what you are learning in lessons and what you need to do to improve.

Our best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nada Trikić Her Majesty's Inspector