



Looe Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112062
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 289163
Inspection dates 14–15 February 2007
Reporting inspector Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Sunrising
School category	Community		East Looe
Age range of pupils	11–16		Looe PL13 1NQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01503 262625
Number on roll (school)	607	Fax number	01503 265435
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Moyra Evans
		Headteacher	Heather Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	14–15 February 2007	289163

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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

Looe Community School is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving the town of Looe and its surrounding area. It was awarded performing arts specialist status in 2004. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is close to the national average. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Looe Community School provides a good standard of education. Standards are above average and students achieve well. National examination and test results in 2004 and 2005 were significantly above national averages. The school experienced a number of problems in staffing in 2005 and 2006, caused by some long term absence and consequent difficulties in recruiting temporary teachers. This led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. As a result, examination results fell slightly in 2006. Even with this dip, results exceeded national averages and students made good progress. These issues have now been resolved; the school is fully staffed and the quality of teaching is much more consistent. The very large majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good and some were outstanding; no inadequate teaching was observed. However, there is room for extending the very best practice so that more lessons are of the highest quality. In particular, teachers do not always make sufficient use of assessment during lessons to help students make even greater progress.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Teachers know their students well, relationships are very good and students feel well supported by the school. As a result, the personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students are confident and articulate. They behave well and the vast majority have good attitudes to learning. Students' social, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school's work in the performing arts makes a significant contribution to this area.

The school's curriculum is good. The school offers a wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11. This provision meets the needs of students well and helps support their good achievement. There is a broad range of activities outside of lessons, with many linked to the school's performing arts specialism. Students enjoy these opportunities and participation rates are high.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and her senior colleagues form a strong and effective team. They have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are taking effective action to support further improvement. Changes have been made to the way in which middle leaders contribute to the school's leadership and management. While these changes are already having an impact, practice is not yet consistently good across the school. Specialist work in the performing arts is good and is making a key contribution to the school's overall development. The school is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of the work of middle leaders in evaluation and planning and sharpen the targets they set for their departments and for individual teachers.
- Use assessment more effectively in lessons to promote learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Although there is variation between different year groups, students generally enter the school in Year 7 with average standards. They make good progress during their time in school and leave having attained standards that are above the national average. No groups of students make less than satisfactory progress and most progress well as a result of good teaching and very effective support and guidance. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress.

National Key Stage 3 test results were very high in 2004 and 2005, but fell slightly in 2006. The proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades at C or better also fell in 2006, although the average point score achieved by students increased. This dip in results is attributable to difficulties that the school faced in recruiting temporary teachers to cover staff absence in 2005/06. As a consequence, while students made good progress overall, there was an inconsistent pattern of achievement across subject areas. These difficulties have now been resolved and lesson observations undertaken during the inspection demonstrate that students' progress across different subjects is now more consistent.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students' behaviour is good and exclusion levels are very low. Attendance is good and students say that they enjoy coming to school. Students from all year groups feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon through the school's highly effective student council. The council has also promoted healthy living very well. The school's personal, social and health education programme ensures that students are well informed and helped to live safe and healthy lives. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students' cultural development is strongly supported by their work in drama, dance and music and in many other subjects, as well as by the uplifting assemblies.

The school's outstanding partnership work makes a valuable contribution to students' personal development. For example, a talk given by a local prison officer to Year 10 students about losing freedom was inspirational. Fund raising and performing arts activities support close links with the local community and with local primary schools. Preparation for students' economic well-being is excellent, with good work experience for older students and a comprehensive work-related learning programme throughout the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The vast majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good and a number were outstanding. Well planned work, good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and helpful marking create lessons in which students learn and achieve well. Relationships are very good and students have good attitudes to learning. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and achieve as well as other students. In the very best lessons, highly enthusiastic teaching stimulates and challenges students so that they make rapid progress. Teachers' expectations are high and the work matches the capabilities of the students very closely. In a very few lessons, there are some weaknesses. In some, the pace of work slows when students have to wait to start a new activity, or when students are working on the same activity for too long. Even where teaching is good, teachers do not always make sufficient use of assessment during the lesson to help students make progress. For example, although the objectives of lessons are usually clear to students, many teachers do not review progress against these objectives as the lesson progresses. Opportunities for students to make greater progress by learning how to assess their own or other students' work are also limited.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some very strong features. The number and range of courses offered to Years 10 and 11 have been increased to provide a good range of vocational courses, taught both in school and at local colleges. Many of these courses are closely linked to the needs of the local economy. The curriculum already matches the needs of students well and enables them to make good progress. However, the school is continuing to review and modify the curriculum in order to improve it further.

The school's performing arts status makes a good contribution to the curriculum. All students in Years 7 to 9 take dance and drama, and these are popular options for GCSE. Many subjects, such as geography, incorporate music and presentation into lessons. Excellent links with the community and with other schools and colleges help extend and enrich the curriculum. There is an extensive range of musical, dramatic and sporting activities outside of lessons and a variety of local and overseas visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff are extremely committed to the care of their students. Students themselves contribute well, acting as mentors to younger students and as 'buddies' to students when they join the school. Excellent links with outside agencies also make a very useful contribution to the quality of care, guidance and support. Arrangements for safeguarding students are excellent. Child

protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place and well understood. Arrangements for supporting vulnerable students are excellent.

As a result of the school's very effective provision, students feel safe and well supported and are confident that there is an adult that they can speak to if needed. Students confirm that there is little bullying and that when it does occur it is dealt with well. The very large majority of parents are also very pleased with the support given to their children.

The achievement of students is monitored very closely and additional support is given where necessary. Effective systems for reporting help students understand how well they are doing and provide useful information for parents. Detailed and helpful guidance helps students to make mature and sensible decisions about their future. As a result, a very large proportion of students progress to further education and training when they leave the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and her senior colleagues form a strong, effective team and provide clear direction for the school. There was a very close match between the judgements made by the inspection team and the school's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders also have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve further. Their monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and has a positive impact on the quality of provision. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school and provide effective support and challenge to the school's leadership.

A number of changes have been made to the way in which middle leaders contribute to the school's leadership and management. The school has recently been organised into four faculty areas. While still in its infancy, this is already leading to greater sharing of ideas between teachers and more consistent practice across the school. However, it does not yet fully support greater accountability for individual subject leaders or teachers. Changes have also been made to the way in which departments and individual teachers evaluate their performance and plan for the future. These changes are already leading to better evaluation and planning across the school. However, practice is still rather inconsistent and targets for improvement are not always sufficiently sharply focused.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings.

We judged Looe to be a good school. We were very impressed by your maturity, confidence and behaviour. You were extremely friendly and polite and very willing to share your thoughts and ideas with us. The atmosphere around the site was very good and the students that we spoke to were very positive about the school. We were also impressed by the way in which the school cares for you and helps you to develop as young people. Many students spoke enthusiastically about the support that tutors and other staff provide.

The school helps you to achieve good examination results. The school found it difficult to recruit temporary teachers to cover some staff absence in 2005/6. This meant that some lessons did not help you to make sufficient progress and results went down a little last year. These problems have been resolved and teaching is clearly much more consistent now. The lessons that we saw were almost all good and some were outstanding. We could see that you respond positively to good teaching and enjoy learning. We did think, however, that teachers do not always make sufficient use of assessment during lessons to help you make as much progress as possible. We have asked the school to develop this area in the future.

The headteacher and other senior staff clearly know how to improve the school further. We have suggested that they work closely with learning coordinators and subject leaders to ensure that everyone is able to play a full part in this improvement.

The inspection team wishes you well for the future.