



Lancaster Royal Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119810
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291550
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Garry Jones HMI

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | East Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Lancaster, Lancashire |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 | | LA1 3EF |
| Gender of pupils | Boys | Telephone number | 01524 580600 |
| Number on roll (school) | 1008 | Fax number | 01524 847947 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 309 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr John Holland |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Andrew M Jarman |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 January 2001 | | |

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|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 11–18 | 17–18 January 2007 | 291550 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and three Additional Inspectors. Two inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection completed a review of the boarding provision as a follow up to the regulatory inspection of 2003.

Description of the school

This is a selective school which draws students from across the city of Lancaster and a wide surrounding area. It is slightly larger than average in size with a large sixth form. In addition, it has boarding provision for up to 180 boys. The majority of students are from professional home backgrounds and the proportion entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below that found nationally as is the proportion that does not have English as a first language. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below that found nationally, but there are eight students with a statement for special educational need. The school has specialist status for technology and for languages. It has the Investors in People award and the Sportsmark Gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides very good value for money. The overwhelming majority of parents value greatly the school and its impact on their children. Students are selected by ability and the attainment on entry is well above that found nationally. In Key Stage 3, students make outstanding progress and the results in the national tests are exceptionally high in all subjects. The students continue to make outstanding progress in Key Stage 4 and all students achieve the nationally expected level of 5+ A*– C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Indeed the average number of passes in 2006 was well above nine and over two thirds of the grades achieved were at the A* and A level. Attainment in the sixth form is also well above that found nationally and represents very good progress. The school has set extremely challenging targets as a technology college and in 2006 all were met with the exception of two in which the targets were close to being met.

The progress that students make reflects their extremely positive attitudes and their determination to do well. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning is a highly significant strength of the school. They are supported effectively by teaching, which is outstanding overall; although in a very few lessons the standards of teaching are not as high. Good subject knowledge and the very effective use of questioning are combined with extremely high expectations to get the most out of students. Students receive very good guidance from staff on what they have to do to reach their challenging academic targets.

The curriculum offered within the school is extremely broad and reflects its specialist status. All students study two languages in Year 8 and three in Year 9; and follow a technology subject and at least one language to GCSE. Links with local business and the community are well established and effectively support the curriculum, work experience, enterprise initiatives and the highly thought of Leadership for Life conference in the sixth form. The curriculum is enriched with a broad range of subject visits at home and abroad and through links with schools in Europe and India. The range of extra-curricular activities is extremely impressive. There are opportunities to participate in musical and dramatic productions and an exceptionally broad range of sporting activities and other clubs and societies.

The students' personal development and well-being are outstanding as is the care and guidance provided. Students' greatly value the opportunities the school provides for them. They attend regularly and their behaviour is exemplary. Incidents of bullying are rare, but there are effective support systems in place to address any issues. Students are confident that they have someone to talk to if they are in difficulty. Their social, moral, cultural and spiritual awareness is extremely well developed. They are well supported in developing a healthy interest in physical activity and have a very good understanding of the principles of healthy living. There are well established systems to ensure the safety of all students. Students feel safe within the school and their sensible behaviour ensures their safety, despite the site being divided by busy roads.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is ably led by a headmaster with a clear vision for its development. He is very well supported by a highly effective team of senior and middle managers. The school has used its specialist status to establish links with local primary and secondary schools to enrich their provision and to contribute to the wider community. The excellent self evaluation of the school was derived from a detailed process of self review carefully linked to the performance management system. This illustrated that the school knows its strengths and areas for development exceptionally well. The inspection validated all but one of the grades in the self evaluation and this grade was raised. This school has excellent capacity to improve and has effectively addressed issues raised in the last inspection. The governing body provides outstanding support and is ably led by an experienced chair who knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and ensures that it is held to account for its performance.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form provision is outstanding. The levels of attainment achieved by learners are well above those found nationally and the analysis of performance, by the school, shows that learners make excellent progress. This reflects the outstanding teaching within the sixth form. The retention rate in the sixth form is very high and almost all learners go on to higher education. The curriculum includes a broad range of academic subjects, which meet the needs of the learners very well. In addition, a range of courses within general studies and a Leadership for Life conference, held jointly with the local girls' grammar school, broaden provision. There is an extensive range of opportunities for learners to contribute to school life, including the school council, the sixth form committee and roles as prefects and mentors for younger students. Learners are active in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They appreciate the high quality of provision that they benefit from. The sixth form is effectively managed and there are carefully planned procedures to ensure that learners are given very good advice when making their decisions to stay on at the school and to progress to university. There are also effective transition arrangements for learners who transfer from other schools. Learners' progress is monitored closely and where necessary appropriate support strategies are put in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- The inspection identified no significant issues for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are well above average. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in the national tests is consistently well above the national average in all the subjects. A very high proportion of students attain the

highest grades possible. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, students attain standards that are well above those found nationally. In 2006, the average number of passes per pupil was well above nine and approximately two thirds of all of the grades were at A* and A grade. Overall, the standards of attainment are exceptionally and consistently high.

Students made outstanding progress across Key Stages 3 and 4. The measure of value added against prior attainment was in the top 5 percent of schools in 2004 and 2005. The contextual value added measure is high, but underestimates the progress made by the highest achieving students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development is outstanding. They are proud of their school and enjoy all aspects of school life. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school, and students have very positive attitudes to learning. Students value the very good relationships they develop with their teachers and each other. They say their school is a friendly place and appreciate the support and encouragement offered by staff. Consequently, students have a sense of security and feel safe. High levels of attendance and very low levels of exclusion, confirm that this is the place that they want to be. Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very strong. They have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, and are enthusiastic participants in the school's extensive programme of physical activities. Students are making outstanding progress in developing the personal qualities, which enable them to make a strong contribution to the community. They run their own forums for 'welfare' and 'anti-bullying', which make an important contribution to the school council. An outstanding annual charity fund raising campaign, organised by the students, gives many opportunities for them to develop the skills that will benefit their future economic well-being, which is further enhanced by their academic performance and well developed social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding throughout the school. The vast majority of lessons seen were at least good and over half were outstanding. Students say: 'most of the teaching we receive challenges us, uses humour well, corrects our work by telling us what we need to do to improve, doesn't make things too easy for us, raises the bar when necessary and lowers it when we need it lowering.' This is an accurate assessment of provision. Teachers demonstrate a very secure command of their subjects. They set

a fast pace in lessons and have very high expectations of what students can achieve. Lessons are characterised by mutual respect and excellent relationships between teachers and students. Teachers build well on the very positive attitudes and extremely strong work ethic of the students. The students' thirst for and delight in their learning is very noticeable. Teachers continually challenge students with a good range of teaching strategies, including exceptionally effective use of targeted questions, often brilliantly designed to develop thinking skills. Students are constantly encouraged to strive for high standards in all that they do. Despite much good practice there are instances where the regularity and quality of written feedback and marking are not up to the generally high standard throughout the school. Oral feedback on the other hand is consistently useful and of good quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets statutory requirements, and provides students with an outstanding range and balance of opportunities and experience. Innovative arrangements for citizenship and for personal, social and health education fully exploit the wide range of skills amongst the teachers. Students themselves greatly appreciate the opportunities available to them and play an important part in evaluating the success of the course. Enterprise is supported through enterprise days and a range of competitions including Young Engineers. The school introduces its students to the world of work through a period of work experience and community service, which is an integral part of the curriculum in Year 11. The school supports its students' culture of participation. A quite exceptional range of well-attended after-school activities makes an excellent contribution to pupils' physical, health, and social development. Leadership skills are well developed through the combined cadet force, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the Leadership for Life conference in the sixth form. An extremely diverse range of sporting activities is offered with a particular emphasis on cricket and rugby together with more unusual sports such as rowing, weight training and water polo. Overseas sporting fixtures are a regular occurrence. There are well established links with schools in Europe and India.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care and guidance is outstanding. The vast majority of students and parents think very highly of this aspect of the school's provision. The school safeguards its students very well with child protection procedures, and health and safety risk assessments in place. Special care is given to the problem of students' safety when crossing the roads that intersect the site. Rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by pastoral staff, and students know who to go to if they have a problem. Pastoral support for students is particularly strong and the role of the form tutor is well developed. There are very good transition arrangements to ensure that students

make a smooth progression to their new school. An outstanding example of the school's care is the mentoring system for new entrants and other Key Stage 3 students. The learning mentor and an extensive team of peer mentors are on hand to help them settle in. This enables successful early intervention to identify students with learning difficulties. Careers education and guidance are very good. Strong links with parents and external agencies ensure the best care for students from the outset. However, a small number of parents feel that their views are not taken account of sufficiently. Very well developed systems track individual students' progress and achievement and this is a strength of the excellent academic guidance students receive. This enables staff to intervene with focused support when a pupil needs help or is in danger of underachieving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management overall are outstanding. The headmaster has an exceptionally clear vision for the development of the school, with a focus on extending links into the wider community. This is well supported by the specialist status of the school. Thorough systems for self review are in place and include the detailed analysis of attainment including the relative performance of staff members and comparisons with other selective schools nationally. The self review forms the basis for the development of whole school priorities for improvement. There are clear links to the system of performance management and the setting of individual and departmental targets. The strong team of senior and middle managers within the school have a clear awareness of the strengths and areas for further development and there is a strong commitment to constant improvement. There is a very clear focus on staff development with a generous allocation of resources, including the provision of sabbaticals for staff. The governing body is well led by a long established and experienced chair of governors. Governors are very supportive of the school and an extensive system of committees ensures that duties are fulfilled well. The school is held to account for the outcomes for young people very well and the governors have high expectations. There is thorough and detailed strategic planning for the long term development of provision.

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Inspection judgements

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| <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? | 1 | 1 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | |
| The attendance of learners | 1 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 | |
| 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? | 1 | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 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? | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 1 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 | |
| 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

Lancaster Royal Grammar School

East Road

Lancaster

Lancashire

LA1 3EF

17 January 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave to us when we recently inspected your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you about your learning and your views on the school. We agree with you and your parents that you attend an outstanding school.

We recognised and valued the enthusiasm that you show for learning and for the wide range of opportunities that you have to participate in sport and other extra-curricular activities. Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. This contributes to the excellent progress you make and the extremely high standards you achieve. Overall, we thought that the teaching you receive is outstanding and that you are given excellent support and guidance to help you achieve. We believe that all the staff work hard to ensure that you develop the social and other skills that you will require to be effective citizens. Their care and guidance for your well-being is exemplary.

We judge that the school is ably led by the headmaster and his senior colleagues. They review the successes of the school carefully and are planning for continuous improvement.

Best wishes for the future and continue with the enthusiasm that you display for learning.

Garry Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools