

The Long Field High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120308
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	291698
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Grounds HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	443
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Jones
Headteacher	Rob Garrett
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	Ambleside Way Off Leicester Rd MELTON MOWBRAY LE13 0BN
Telephone number	01664 561234
Fax number	01664 566065

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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

The Long Field High School is situated on the south side of Melton Mowbray. Students come from within the town and from some of its surrounding villages. The school is smaller than at the previous inspection but is popular with parents. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is smaller than the national average, as is the number of students from social and economic disadvantage as measured by their eligibility for free school meals. There is a low percentage of students from ethnic minorities. The number for whom English is an additional language is very small.

The schools in the town are being reorganised by the local authority and plans are being prepared for this school and the other two high schools to become 11-16 schools. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Long Field High School provides its students with a satisfactory education and is well regarded by its students and their parents. The new headteacher clearly recognises where the school has more to do as well as its strengths. Actions set in place to improve provision are beginning to show some impact, although this is not yet reflected in improved achievement. Standards are above average but this represents only satisfactory achievement.

The performance of the students reflects the quality of the teaching, which is satisfactory. Within this broad descriptor there is some good and outstanding teaching, but not enough teaching is effectively supporting students to achieve the higher levels of knowledge, skills and understanding of which they are capable. In particular, the systems for tracking and enhancing students' progress, whilst improving, are not yet good enough. The atmosphere in which students learn is in almost all cases a calm and tranquil one. It is abundantly clear that students enjoy their time in the school and appreciate what teachers do for them. Inspectors were impressed by the good oral communication skills of the students they met.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They are involved in a wide range of fund raising events, and have a clear sense of right and wrong. Team events are popular; a typical example observed was a game of Danish handball in which the whole class took part energetically and in which there was a very strong element of co-operation and inclusion. This is a particular strength of the school. Students are developing a good knowledge of different cultures and way of life through the links with pupils in Uganda and, for example, from the wide range of work they do in art. Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. They reach above average standards in literacy and numeracy and benefit from a well structured programme of careers guidance.

The broad and balanced curriculum is enriched by extensive fieldwork visits and residential trips, for example the Year 7 outdoor pursuits residential in the Ardeche region of France. These provide opportunities for students to extend their personal development and contribute to their enjoyment of learning.

The school has satisfactory leadership and management. The new headteacher is successfully challenging the school whilst having to attend to the issues of local reorganisation. The school has good links with many local partners including some local firms, social services and Connexions, and these successfully promote the development of the students. The school acknowledges that its managers are not yet given enough responsibility for ensuring students make good progress in their subject areas, particularly because the tools for tracking students' performance are not yet used efficiently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and of marking of students' work.
- Improve the use of performance data at all levels to rapidly identify students who are underachieving, stretch the more able and track progress more effectively.
- Share the best assessment practice in the school so that all students have a more precise understanding of how to improve academically.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Attainment on entry to the school is above average, and standards for students leaving the school are generally above average in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In 2006 standards had slipped, especially in English, but the latest unvalidated data for 2007 suggest that the decline has been reversed, with particular improvement noted in mathematics. Standards vary in other subjects, but progress is satisfactory overall. In French and German progress is good and standards are above the averages for Leicestershire schools as well as those nationally. In most subjects the attainment of girls is better than that of boys, although boys generally make more progress than girls. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities, as well as those from social and economically disadvantaged homes, do slightly better than others although their progress is still only satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students in Year 9, about to leave the school, spoke articulately about how they appreciated the way they had grown as young adults whilst at the school. This view was echoed in the comments made by parents. The school is a harmonious society, welcoming those from all backgrounds. Students acquire a good appreciation of their culture and that of others. For example, the school has 'adopted' children in Africa. Most students behave well, even when not directly supervised as at break times. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Whilst students are able to reflect on issues of substance, this aspect of personal development is held back because the planned opportunities for them to do so are limited. Attendance is in line with the national average. Students enjoy school, and particularly demonstrate this through high levels of participation in after-hours activities. The school has won awards for promoting healthy lifestyles and many students act on the advice they receive, exemplified by their choice of food at lunchtime. Students make a good contribution to their community. The school council is actively improving the school environment, although not yet becoming involved in the academic side of school life. Students put themselves forward for the local youth council. They also act most responsibly to their colleagues, and 'Bully Blockers' make an effective contribution to making students feel safe in school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The very best lessons are characterised by stimulating and energetic teaching, maintaining a brisk pace, with all students fully engaged and enjoying their learning. More typically, learning objectives and outcomes are routinely shared with students but are not differentiated, being generic rather than sharply focused. During lessons teachers do not sufficiently check that students fully grasp what they have to do and this sometimes hinders progress. Lessons are competently planned although there is no common lesson plan format. In the satisfactory lessons observed, teachers' planning focused on attainment rather than progress, and sometimes teachers did not ensure that all students were actively involved in the activities.

The school acknowledges some inconsistency in the marking of books. Where marking is thorough and diagnostic, it supports the raising of standards. However, this practice is still not yet consistent across the school.

Since the last inspection there have been some improvements in assessment and recording arrangements. The school has identified better use of departmental data to track students' progress and the setting of targets as a key priority for improvement. Assessment for learning has yet to be fully embedded across all subjects, although it is used well in humanities and English. Subject targets in the reports to parents are overwhelmingly generic and lack a sharp focus on how to improve.

Teaching assistants provide satisfactory support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Vulnerable students are well cared for and supported.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum helps all students to acquire knowledge and skills whilst developing lively enquiring minds, and all students take part in a minimum of two hours of physical education each week. The school acknowledges and is reviewing its limited time allocation for art and music. Citizenship is largely delivered well through humanities, tutor time, the school's curriculum enrichment programme (CEP) and personal, social and health education. It is reported to parents inconsistently through the tutor comment section of students' reports and is only formally assessed at the beginning and end of Key Stage 3.

The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended and popular with students. The CEP encompasses 15 modules, including sport, media, recreation and citizenship based activities. A prominent feature of the wider provision is the extensive fieldwork and visits and residential trips, all of which contribute significantly to students' enjoyment of learning.

Curricular continuity is maintained through well established links with local high schools, ensuring students make a successful transition when they move on at the end of Year 9. Students speak favourably about transition arrangements, particularly from Key Stage 2 to 3.

The school is part of a group that has recently been successful in its application to pilot diplomas in engineering and creative arts and media.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school is a caring community in many ways. For example, it works hard to provide for students at risk of being excluded from school. Students appreciate the advice they are given on which to base their choice of subjects at their upper school.

Students do not achieve more because they are not given detailed information in every subject of exactly what they should be doing to improve their work. Advice is too frequently overly general to be useful. Whilst teachers and teaching assistants know students with learning difficulties or disabilities well, so increasing their confidence and enjoyment of school, targets lack sufficient detail either to measure progress or inform teachers of how best to meet these needs. The school has not yet implemented an effective system to monitor the progress made by these students. The school complies with legislation designed to ensure students' safety. It

places a high priority on promoting healthy living. At the time of the inspection, visitors to the school were met by a display of the school's nutrition action group.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher already has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A clearly written school improvement plan sets out current and future priorities with realistic and sometimes challenging targets. These improvements are quite recent and follow a period when not enough had been done to address the issues raised at the school's last inspection. As a result, they have not yet had time to have a marked impact on students' progress. The use of performance data, particularly by middle managers, is not yet rigorous and consistently sharp enough to help raise standards. The tracking of individual students is not sufficiently refined to rapidly identify those students who may be falling behind. However, the new systems are promising, and well focused strategic leadership shows that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Self-evaluation is becoming embedded in school practice but has too strong an emphasis on provision rather than impact. Monitoring of teaching takes place through performance management processes but lacks coherent links to the school priorities. The professional development of middle managers is appropriately seen as a key feature of the school's development, with three teachers already attending the Leading from the Middle programme.

The relationship between the school and its governors is based on trust and openness. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are supportive and are beginning to play a more active strategic role in school improvement.

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
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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
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	2
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	3
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

29 June 2007

Dear Students Inspection of The Long Field High School, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0BN

On behalf of the inspection team may I say that it was a pleasure to meet many of you during the inspection and listen to the many positive things you had to say about the school. Thank you for your participation in our enquiries.

We judged that the school is providing you with a satisfactory education. It is well regarded by you, its students, and your parents. The headteacher knows what it does well, and why, and knows what it needs to do to make it even better in the future.

You get good results in the Key Stage 3 assessment tests. But taking into account your starting points on arrival from primary school, you could do even better. The school understands that it can improve its work in tracking your academic progress and supporting you as you go through the school. An important strength is that the school is supportive and 'inclusive'. By this we mean that all students, whatever their backgrounds and abilities, are drawn into the life of the school. We were impressed by the orderly and calm environment for learning. The school seemed to us a very friendly place to belong to. We recognised too the wide range of activities outside the classroom which the school makes available and we were impressed by how articulate the oldest of you were in the meetings that we had.

We have said that in order to improve, the school needs to:

- improve its teaching and the way your work is marked
- develop the ways that staff review and check performance, both at whole-school level and in terms of your individual academic progress
- assist its teachers in their work to set targets for your improvement, so that you consistently know how to improve your work.

We are confident that you will want to help the staff in all of this, so that in turn they can help you.

The inspection team wish you well with your studies and your futures.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Grounds (HMI) Lead inspector