

Lostock College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106365
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	295347
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Janet Palmer HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	448
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Kilvert
Headteacher	Mrs Dawn Farrent
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2006
School address	Selby Road Stretford Manchester Lancashire M32 9PL
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Lostock College is a smaller than average secondary modern school for students aged 11 to 16 years. It has specialist status for performing arts and holds the Artsmark Gold award. The college is situated in an area of Trafford where the level of social deprivation is above the national norm. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals is above average. The mobility rate of students entering and leaving the college at other than the usual times is well above average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational need is also above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Lostock College provides a satisfactory education overall, although there are many good, and some outstanding features. Improvements since the last inspection have been rapid and impressive and are in no small part attributable to the excellent leadership of the headteacher, well supported by her senior leadership team and the local authority. The appointment of many new teaching staff, including several in positions of leadership, together with rigorous self-evaluation and appropriate development strategies, has led to enhanced provision in all areas. The overall effect is a college which knows its strengths and weaknesses, has good staff morale and well motivated students. Improvements are particularly reflected in the better quality of teaching and learning which is now good, although the setting of homework remains inconsistent. Personal development and well-being is also good.

Examination results have improved, although students continue to achieve less well than they should in English. Nevertheless, literacy levels are satisfactory. Examination data varies from year to year partly because of the small numbers in each year group and the high proportion of students who join the college at a late stage in their secondary education. This also affects attendance data which, although improving and just below average when compared to other secondary modern schools, remains well below the national average.

Most impressive is the outstanding care, guidance and support for students regardless of their ability levels, personal needs or length of time in the college. A great deal of attention is paid to providing a suitable curriculum for each individual and this is much appreciated by the students, their parents and carers. The curriculum is good and meets students' needs well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English.
- Improve students' attendance.
- Ensure that the setting of homework is consistent and that the work is sufficiently challenging.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory overall. Students join the college with levels of attainment that are well below the national average. In 2006 attainment was also well below the national average, although broadly in line with that in similar schools. Results varied between subjects and there were some significant instances of underachievement. At Key Stage 3 the number of students reaching the expected levels in mathematics and science improved and moved close to that seen nationally. However, results in English were significantly below average.

The proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE was below the national average although in line with other secondary modern schools. However, the number

whose passes included English and mathematics was well below the average and results in English were particularly weak. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved better than their peers.

The college has rigorous and detailed procedures for tracking students' progress, and reliable data provided by the college indicates significant improvements in levels of progress in both key stages since the 2006 results. Inspectors agree with these findings. In lessons, many students are now making at least satisfactory and often good progress and their written work indicates that this is being sustained over time. Progress in literacy and numeracy is good and achievement in the foundation subjects has improved due to the good quality of teaching and learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

There have been significant improvements in the personal development and well-being of students since the last inspection. The college has enhanced its provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and students report with pride their knowledge of different faiths and cultures. Students are enthusiastic about many aspects of the college which they say is small but friendly. They reported that they enjoy coming to college, feel safe and that there are few incidents of misbehaviour or bullying. The majority of parents and carers agree that behaviour is good.

Punctuality has notably improved since the last inspection; however attendance remains well below the national average. The college has robust strategies in place to improve attendance but overall figures are influenced by the high numbers who join in later years. Some of these students have a history of very poor attendance at their previous schools and despite the college's determined efforts, their attendance has not improved sufficiently well.

Students are aware of healthy lifestyles, particularly in relation to food and exercise. They say that food in the dining hall has begun to improve but still have concerns about the lack of choice, variety and free drinking water. Students on the school council commented that they were campaigning for improved toilet facilities. The additional clubs and sports activities are valued and students recognise the contribution of exercise to their health and development. Similarly, the provision of 'every child matters' lessons through the house system helps with general learning skills, but particularly with emotional development. Students are well mannered, treat visitors with courtesy and display social skills that will benefit them in their future careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are planned with clear objectives and appropriate tasks to meet students' needs. Teachers show good subject knowledge and students show a willingness to learn. Teachers make sure that students understand what they are learning and why. Lessons are well paced and have a good variety of activity. Proficient use of digital projectors is enlivening lessons. Students engage well with the activities and enjoy the opportunities they are given to work independently as well as discuss and reflect on their learning. Those with learning difficulties are very well supported in class by skilful learning assistants.

Appropriate systems are in place for checking students' progress. Students who are underachieving are identified and given additional support. The marking of written work is generally positive and supportive and most students know what they need to do to improve their grades.

Inspectors agree with the view of parents and carers that the setting of homework is variable and sometimes lacks challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The college offers a broad and balanced curriculum that has improved since the last inspection and is enhanced by the specialist performing arts status. At Key Stage 3 students have the opportunity to study dance and drama as well as undertake a modern foreign language at GCSE. At Key Stage 4 there is a very wide selection of academic and vocational options to meet the needs of all students including the gifted and talented and those who are disaffected or have learning difficulties.

At both key stages the college provides thoughtfully considered personalised timetables to meet individual needs, particularly for those students who are entering the school at different points in the year. Alternative curriculum options include off site extended work placements, courses designed to raise self-esteem and creative learning sessions. The needs of more able students are met through, among other things, team building residential courses, visits to local universities and summer school activities. The college also offers an impressive range of extra-curricular options which help to develop students' talents, interests and aptitudes outside the classroom. These include many subject clubs, sporting and performance arts activities.

Literacy and numeracy are enhanced through a dedicated programme of lessons at Key Stage 3. Student evaluations and teacher assessments have shown these to be both popular and successful in developing these basic skills. Comprehensive and coherent programmes of personal, health and social education and citizenship encourage students to lead safe and healthy lives, understand their responsibilities and contribute to wider community activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students benefit from excellent personal support from form tutors, heads of houses and the student support services. A very strong feature of the college is the provision for students at risk of disaffection and exclusion who often have complex needs. The special educational needs coordinator and pastoral team work closely together to provide specific support to individual students on a phased basis to meet their learning and social and emotional needs. The on-site provision is very effective. The personalised learning provided is exemplary and students praise the adults involved and the strategies used. Awareness of students' emotional needs is central to the college's focus for meeting the needs of learners.

Teaching assistants and other adults in the school are used very well to assist with learning. Students say there is always an adult around who they can go to for help and that the headteacher 'treats us like she would treat her own children'. Students are aware of their personal targets and recognise the progress they are making as individuals. The college uses external agencies effectively to help prepare students for future learning, careers and

employment. Arrangements for safeguarding children are in place and statutory requirements are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Issues from the previous inspection have been vigorously tackled by a senior management team that is committed to improving the college. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and she is ably supported by a very strong senior team. They are providing the college with clear educational direction and have ably ensured that this direction is shared at every level. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are robust and provide an accurate view of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Effective departmental reviews provide supporting analyses of the quality of teaching and learning and, combined with a thorough system of tracking student progress, help to identify areas for development. The quality of middle management is generally good, but not consistently so and much is being done to address this. A significant level of staff changes has been used well to provide a more effective management structure.

There is a very strong commitment to inclusion and a range of strategies are in place to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can. Resources are effectively deployed and a particular strength is in the quality of additional support to meet individual students' needs. Provision is generous but, overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

The governing body is good. It is well informed and has a committee structure that enables it to take a full part in the strategic development of the college. It strikes an appropriate balance of support and challenge. There is good capacity to improve.

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	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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2

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	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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?	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.

Annex A

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	3
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

Inspection of Lostock College, Manchester, M32 9PL.

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so welcome at your college. We appreciate the time many of you gave to tell us about your work and other activities.

Your college provides you with a satisfactory education overall, although there are many good and some outstanding features. This is what we found out during our visit.

- The college is very well led by Mrs Farrent and the rest of the senior management team. Your teachers try very hard to ensure that you all have the opportunity to achieve as well as you can.
- Your achievements in most subjects have improved since the last inspection, mostly due to the good teaching and learning that is now taking place. However, results in English could be much better. Those of you with special needs do particularly well because your teachers pay very close attention to your needs and provide excellent support and guidance.
- You tell us you enjoy coming to college where you feel safe and largely free from incidents of misbehaviour or bullying. We found you to be well mannered; you treat visitors with courtesy and display good social skills. You have learned a lot about different faiths and cultures and what it means to be a good citizen. You are aware of healthy lifestyles, but think that college lunches, although better than in the past, do not offer enough choice. You would also like to see better toilet facilities for students.
- You enjoy most of your lessons and are given lots of opportunities to get involved in activities and discussions. Teachers mark your work regularly and most of you know what to do to improve. However, we agreed with your parents and carers that you need to be set more regular and challenging homework. Punctuality to lessons has improved but some of you are still not attending school regularly and this is affecting your results in examinations.
- The college curriculum is good with plenty of opportunities to study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects. You also have many popular extra-curricular options.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for welcoming us into your college and being so friendly and polite. I wish you every success for the future.