



Richard Lander School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112055
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 298255
Inspection dates 14–15 February 2007
Reporting inspector Pauline Robins HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Higher Besore Road
School category	Community		Truro
Age range of pupils	11–16		TR3 6LT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01872 273750
Number on roll (school)	1263	Fax number	01872 264372
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Barry Tripp
		Headteacher	Trevor Coldman
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	14–15 February 2007	298255

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Richard Lander is a larger than average school for students aged 11 to 16. The school has recently been rebuilt and relocated on a new site on the outskirts of the city. The catchment area includes part of the urban area of Truro but also rural communities extending to the north Cornwall coast. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average and the number of students with a statement of special educational need is below the national average. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.

The school became a specialist technology college in 1998 and is also designated as a training school for teachers. From September 2006, an Area Resource Base (ARB) has become part of the school provision. This is a facility for students who have a wide range of complex needs that cannot be met in mainstream education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Richard Lander is a very good school with many areas of outstanding practice. The greatest strength is the determined and purposeful leadership and management. This is exceptional because it drives forward improvement with imagination and no hint of complacency. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, coupled with the support of an excellent governing body, ensures there is a sustained focus on school performance and improvement which gives the school good capacity to improve further. Distributed leadership is another of the keys to the success of this school and extends throughout, including all staff and the students themselves. This leads to a collaborative approach to planning and evaluation which ensures that the principles and values which underpin the school are understood by all.

On entry to the school, students are working at levels which are broadly average or slightly above. By the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, standards are above average. This good achievement is the result of good teaching and the exceptional care and concern that staff have for the students. As the level of monitoring and evaluation throughout the school is robust, the strengths and weaknesses in teaching are already recognised. The quality of care, guidance and support is good rather than outstanding because, although they generally know their predicted grades, the students are not sufficiently aware of what specifically they need to do in order to improve further. The school holds a wealth of data which is used effectively to set whole-school targets, but teachers do not make consistent use of this information to set targets for individuals and ensure that the most able are sufficiently challenged at all times.

The curriculum is outstanding and responsive to the changing needs of the students and the area in which they live. The school has a slightly different focus in each year group which motivates and supports students in their learning. There are alternative pathways for those who find learning difficult or for those who are at risk of exclusion. These offer accredited courses linked to local colleges and are consistent with the strong inclusive ethos of the school. As a result, attendance is good and the number of exclusions is very low with no permanent exclusions for some time.

Students' personal development is outstanding. The behaviour and attitudes of students are a credit to themselves and the outstanding supportive relationships which exist between students and staff and between students themselves. There is a very real sense of caring and happiness which permeates the school.

Specialist and training college status is firmly embedded in the practice of the school. Specialist status in particular has been a positive vehicle for change by supporting the developments in teaching and encouraging the sharing of good practice. The liaison work which takes place with the primary schools is valued and, as one primary headteacher wrote, 'The support offered by the school is exemplary'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make consistent use of the student tracking process to ensure that the work in lessons is appropriately matched to the needs of all learners and challenges the most able.
- Ensure that students fully understand their targets and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' achievement and standards are significantly above average in Key Stage 3. Recent efforts to improve teaching and learning have had the desired impact, for example by identifying and supporting students who are not doing as well as might be expected. These measures were triggered by students' poor performance in English in 2005 and have led to a dramatic rise in the number of students reaching the nationally expected level or higher in 2006. Measures to improve results in mathematics were not as successful because they were not as carefully focused on individual students' performance. Standards and achievement in science have remained consistently above average.

At Key Stage 4, standards have remained above average at GCSE, although these have declined slightly over the last four years. This is the result of the school's successful efforts to provide for the full academic range of its students rather than any drop in achievement. The school's decision to provide equal access for all students to examinations and to find more creative solutions for students who might normally be excluded has resulted in a lower overall percentage gaining A*–C grades. This is most marked amongst the less able boys. Performance in science, design and technology and drama is strong at GCSE. Comparative weaknesses in some other subjects, such as mathematics, are being addressed by improving the way that teachers use assessment to show students where and how to improve.

The school's analysis of student performance shows that current standards at Key Stage 4 are significantly above average and the students are achieving well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. The students are confident and take leadership responsibility for aspects such as peer mentoring, junior sports leadership, the school environment and organising events. They are considerate to others and behave well, both in and around the school. They are proud of their new building. The students display positive attitudes to learning and value the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided at lunchtimes and after school. Attendance is above average, which is indicative of how much students enjoy coming to school. The students adopt safe and healthy lifestyles, for example talking to trusted adults about any incidents of bullying, eating healthily and participating in sport. Their

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They contribute to local, national and international charity events, such as Shelter Box and helping to renovate a school in Uganda. They participate in various events, such as the Cornwall Youth Parliament and an environment club, and recycle waste. They acquire work-related and enterprise skills, which, coupled with their personal qualities and good literacy, numeracy and computer skills, provide them with exceptional support for their economic well-being and aspirations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Both the specialist status and the training college status have had a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning by encouraging critical analysis and developing good practice.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they are generally enthusiastic in their teaching. As a result, students know what they are supposed to learn in each lesson and join in readily by answering questions and playing a full part in paired and group work. Good relationships characterised every lesson seen and the positive attitudes of students and their willingness to learn are important factors in their good achievement. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used appropriately in most lessons. The needs of students with learning difficulties are well understood by teachers, who are ably supported by an effective team of learning support assistants. However, teachers do not always match work closely enough to the different needs and abilities of each of the students. This means that more able students, in particular, do not always make as much progress as they could. In the best lessons, work is marked against clear criteria and students are aware of their targets, both for individual pieces of work and for the longer term, but this practice is inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is extensive and well thought out, meeting students' needs and aspirations very well indeed. For example, the additional 'Learning to Learn' lessons in Year 7 give students a strong start to their educational careers at the school. This positive attitude to learning is further strengthened in Year 8 via the 'special curriculum days' and the 'Super Learning' day that is very popular with the students and their parents. These additional elements to the Key Stage 3 curriculum culminate in Year 9 with the 'SATs with a smile course'. Careful planning of the personal and social curriculum ensures that students gain understanding of life skills, such as the prevention of bullying, staying safe and being healthy. Year 10 students gain very good insights into the demands of employment through the well planned work experience programme and other work-related learning activities such as the manufacturing visits and the two enterprise days. The specialist college status has

enabled the school to successfully introduce a range of applied and vocational GCSE 'pathways' in Years 10 and 11 and a work-based learning course. This high degree of flexibility enables students to study the mix of academic and vocational subjects that most successfully meets their needs. The curriculum is under constant evaluation and review. For example, student feedback last year indicated a strong desire for the introduction of catering as a GCSE option choice. This new course has now been implemented with a very good uptake and enables students to progress to higher level courses in local colleges.

There is an extensive range of lunchtime and after school clubs and activities that significantly enrich students' enjoyment and fulfillment. Additionally, students extend their learning through local and international visits and other events involving technology, languages, performing and creative arts, sports and the humanities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good, with some outstanding features. The level of care provided for all students is exemplary and promotes very high standards of personal development and well-being. A particular strength is the commitment of the staff to provide appropriate support for students' personal needs. To this end, the school works exceptionally well with a wide range of external partners and agencies, including health and social services, local schools and a tertiary college. Students comment that the school is, 'good at finding out about you, what you are good at and helping you develop'. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including some with complex needs, and students in care, are supported well and included effectively in the life of the school. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust and reviewed regularly. Careful attention is given to risk assessments and the school provides a safe and supportive learning environment. Some health and safety issues relating to the limited accommodation in the resource base for students with complex needs are being addressed with support from the local authority.

Students are well informed about their future options, although some students would appreciate earlier guidance on choosing courses of study in Key Stage 4. While monitoring of students' personal development is impacting well on their achievement, tracking of their academic progress is not used consistently by all staff. As a result, lessons do not consistently meet the needs of all, particularly more able students, by providing sufficient challenge. Although many students know their predicted grades, too few are able to talk about individual subject targets and do not understand what specific steps they need to take in order to improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is described by his staff as inspirational. His outstanding leadership and management provide the school with a clear vision for the future. He is supported

by a strong senior team that knows the school well and together they hold members of staff and each other to account. They share a commitment to the strongly held principles of inclusion and strive to achieve continual improvement throughout the school. The leadership team has managed the process of the new build and moving sites exceptionally well and with the minimum of disruption. This has not diverted it from the focus on the core purpose of teaching and learning.

Middle managers understand the change in emphasis of their role; from discrete subject leaders or pastoral managers to one where they have a broader, school-wide understanding which concentrates on students' achievement and standards. There are exemplary moderated systems in place which enable senior managers to monitor the work of subject areas. This good practice is beginning to be used to monitor the work of the 'learning communities' but has yet to be formalised.

Governors clearly understand the role of 'critical friend'. They have the knowledge and understanding to ask the relevant questions that challenge and hold the headteacher and his staff to account. As a result, governance is outstanding. They are actively involved in the process of self-evaluation and development planning and can identify the next stages in the school's development. They also had a crucial role to play in successfully bringing to fruition the building of the new school.

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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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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	1
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

On behalf of the inspection team and myself, I would like to thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave us and say how much we enjoyed our two days in your very good school. Particular thanks must go to the students who represented you so well in the small group discussions and presented your opinions and discussed the work that you are doing.

We believe that there are some outstanding aspects to Richard Lander, not least of which is the exceptional leadership of your headteacher and the support he receives from the leadership team and staff. There is a very caring atmosphere in the school and the relationships you have with each other and with the staff are excellent. Everyone told us how much they enjoy coming to school, including the staff. You feel that you are listened to and that your opinions are valued.

The curriculum is outstanding and offers a number of subjects including some which have been especially requested by you, such as catering. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and school trips which you value and are keen to participate in. The teaching you receive is good and you achieve well. The teachers try to make learning interesting but they are always looking for ways to improve. We have made two suggestions about how they can make teaching and, as a result, learning even better, but I feel certain that you will want to be involved in these developments as well.

The things we have asked teachers to do are:

- Make more use of the information they have on your progress to plan lessons which match the work to support the learning of all students and stretch the most able.
- Use the information they have on your progress to set more individual targets that you understand so that you clearly know what you need to do next in order to improve your grades.

We wish all members of Richard Lander School every success in the future.