

# Lower Lee School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104739
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	301476
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael McDowell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr William Skelton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Christian
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Beaconsfield Road Woolton Liverpool Merseyside L25 6EF
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4284071
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4284737

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The boarding provision was inspected at the same time by a qualified inspector of residential care.

## Description of the school

Lower Lee provides education for up to 48 boys aged between 13 and 16 who have statements of special educational need because of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has 23 residential places that are used mainly for Monday to Friday boarding. A minority of pupils who board attend at another special school in the area. A report on the residential provision may be obtained at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports> . Most pupils are White British but a minority are from minority ethnic groups chiefly Mixed Race British. The standards of most pupils are below or well below average when they join the school in Year 9. The headteacher has been in post for a term. The deputy headteacher and the head of care are newly appointed.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives young people who have had a poor start in education an effective chance to experience success. Achievement is good. Learners, who enter the school in Year 9 make good progress across the curriculum. This is the case particularly in mathematics, information and communication technology, art, and physical education. Many learners leave school with grades from A to G in six GCSE subjects.

Pupils who are below average in reading, spelling and writing benefit from good support and begin to improve their standards of work. However, the absence of a specialist English teacher has meant that results in the GCSE examinations are affected adversely. The literacy demands of the science course followed are such that some pupils cannot do themselves justice in examinations.

Good achievement is due to effective teaching and learning. Teachers know and get on with their pupils very well. They know their subjects and set work carefully matched to pupils' capabilities. Lessons are bright and interesting. Teaching assistants work effectively to help learners stay on task and achieve as much as possible.

The curriculum is exceptionally good. It meets the needs of all learners very well and fully conforms to statutory requirements. Learners have excellent opportunities to gain accreditation for their work and to leave school with worthwhile qualifications. It is very well tailored to meet the particular needs of learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is also enhanced, strongly, by many opportunities for learning outside of the classroom and the school day. Good use is made of the school's residential facilities to extend the learning opportunities of day pupils. Pupils stay behind after the school day to join in the evening social and sporting activities and to receive help with homework.

Personal development is good. The school's excellent systems for managing behaviour and developing learners' sense of community help them to control their impulses and to consider others. Learners understand and follow the school rules. Their behaviour is good and they feel safe in school. They also understand that they should always act safely. They have an outstanding commitment to healthy living and most greatly enjoy sport and physical activity. Their contribution to the community of the school is exceptional. Learners enjoy their time in school. All but a small minority of day pupils, who started at the school with already well-established histories of non-attendance, come to school when they can. The attendance overall is satisfactory although a small minority of day pupils, who started at the school with already well-established histories of non-attendance, have a poorer attendance record.

Care, guidance and support are exemplary. The school is committed to making sure that learners are safe and well cared for. Policies and procedures to ensure child protection and the health and safety of learners are in place and reviewed annually. Each learner has an adult to whom he can turn for advice and support and learners confirm that they are confident that they will be listened to and will be given all the help they need. Effective and challenging targets for academic and personal development are set each term and these help to inform learners what they must do in order to improve. The school works closely with other agencies to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable pupils are recognised and met.

Leadership and management are good. The new leadership team has a broadly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and clear ideas on how to build on previous good practice. It has good capacity to improve. Efficient and effective use is made of

resources. The required checks on all adults who have contact with learners are made and recorded. Governors know the school and carry out their duties effectively. Because the school enables learners to benefit from good education and to achieve well it gives good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The boarding provision is good. It is effective in supporting pupils' welfare and in providing learners with a safe and secure environment that supports their education. The school complies with the National Minimum standards for Residential Special Schools as it did when these were last inspected in September 2006. Those in the residence who attend Lower Lee School have better attendance than their contemporaries, who are day pupils. Boarding learners report that they feel safe and protected and know who they can go to if they are unhappy. The new care manager has a clear vision of how the residential provision should be run and is introducing beneficial changes. Improving the basic recording systems used in residential units is a priority as is developing more extensive communication systems between the school and residence. At present, although a very full record is made of incidents that occur during the school day, this is not passed on to the residential unit in its entirety.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement in English and science at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the attendance of a small minority of day pupils.
- Improve recording systems in residential units and the detail of communication between the residence and the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Learners make good progress. They achieve challenging targets that are set for them and gain more passes in accredited courses than is the case in many similar schools. Almost all those who left in 2007 successfully completed the four GCSE full courses and two GCSE short courses on offer. They gained grades in the range A to G. One pupil gained five A to C grades. Learners were most successful in art and design, mathematics and the short courses in physical education and information and communication technology, in which around a half to two thirds gained at least grade C. Learners were least successful in English, in which the protracted absence of a specialist teacher affected achievement, and in science. Pupils with particular difficulties in literacy who completed the Entry Level course in English instead of the GCSE gained passes at Levels 1 or 2. There are no significant differences in performance between learners of different ethnic groups. The school's internal assessment and tracking of learners' progress shows that those currently in Year 11 are on course to gain grades in external examinations in line with their capabilities.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school helps learners to gain greater understanding of their feelings and to develop good self-control. Most respond to the very supportive structure of praise and reward that the school provides. In the main they obey the school rules and all accept that there are consequences for breaking these. Learners'

behaviour is good. In the past twelve months, there have been just three temporary exclusions. Commitment to healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Learners know the foods that are good for them. All learners take part in sports and physical activities during school time. Many are members of sports clubs and are very physically active beyond the school day and during weekends and holiday periods. They make good progress in developing workplace skills and economic awareness. Learners make an exceptional contribution to their school community. For example, they are spontaneous in sharing their ideas with others during lessons or assemblies. Older learners show a very good example to newcomers and help them become used to the routines of the school. In a community of mixed ethnicity, they develop a strong commitment to racial equality. Attendance is satisfactory. Learners who are weekly boarders attend better than those who are day pupils. A significant reason for higher than usual authorised absence is that a small minority of pupils, because of offending behaviour outside the school, are involved with the processes and sanctions of the Youth Justice system.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers have high levels of expertise in their subjects and they manage the potentially difficult behaviour of their pupils very well. They regularly assess their pupils' performance and carefully monitor their progress. As a result they understand their pupils well and know how to get the best from them. Classrooms are calm and lessons both challenging and enjoyable. Pupils are pleased and motivated by the frequent praise they receive. They take pride in what they achieve. Teaching assistants are fully aware of the objectives of each lesson and work, therefore, very positively in support of pupils' individual needs. They help learners to understand what they must do and boost their confidence sufficiently for them to try. However, there is a lack of expertise in the teaching of English as a subject, which has limited pupils' success in GCSE.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum provides for learners academic and personal development exceptionally well. There is an unusually broad range of GCSE courses for a school of this type. There is good work-related learning for all. In addition, learners who might benefit are given the opportunity to pursue an alternative curriculum based on extended work experience and college based vocational courses. There is well-resourced literacy support for those with general or specific difficulties in reading, spelling and writing. To provide for personal development, time is provided daily for pupils to come together with staff and consider how well they have done in meeting their personal targets. In addition, in personal, social, citizenship and health education, specific work is provided to help learners develop their emotional literacy exceptionally well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The staff are strongly committed to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all learners. Arrangements for safeguarding the pupils are in place. Staff members know their responsibilities and are vigilant. Learners who were asked confirmed that they feel safe at school. Incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour, including racism, are properly recorded. Such instances are very rare. However, the school takes these seriously and is committed to resolving them. Through a system

of personal target setting learners are given very specific guidance on how their attitudes and behaviour should be improved. A strongly motivational points system offers learners tangible rewards for good behaviour, observance of daily routines and good effort. This is very successful in helping learners to develop self-control and improve their behaviour. The school works successfully with other agencies including social services and the child and adolescent mental health service to protect vulnerable children. It takes the initiative in bringing professionals together to work with it in ensuring that appropriate support is given to children at risk and families in crisis. Learners greatly benefit from the guidance they receive. They all have individual education plans that are reviewed each term. Through the targets that are set, they are aware of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. They are also given very good guidance about what to do when they leave school. There is a strong liaison with Connexions and, as a result, pupils benefit well from an established programme of work-related learning and careers education.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership is focused strongly on raising learners' standards of achievement and improving the quality of residential care. Staff share these aims and there is a common sense of purpose. Improvements have been made since the last inspection, particularly in the provision for and standards achieved in design and technology and art and design. Plans to provide new premises for the school are at an advanced stage. This rules out the practicality of substantial spending to improve further the worn out building in which the school is presently housed. Relationships with parents are satisfactory. The school takes effective steps to engage them in their children's education but not all contribute to review meetings and express their views about their child's progress. The governing body carries out its statutory duties well and supports the school effectively. Governors make themselves aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses through visits to the classrooms and through reports from the headteacher and staff. They share in developing the school improvement plan and critically examine proposed developments. They are helpful in enabling the school to work within its budget.

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## Annex A

## 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

Inspection of Lower Lee School, Liverpool, L25 6EF

Thank you very much for being so courteous and helpful to Ms Toller and to me when we visited your school on Wednesday and Thursday. We appreciated your willingness to speak to us and share your views.

You told us that you quite enjoyed coming to school and that you feel safe while you are there. You mostly felt that the food you are given was good and that you had enough to eat. Many of you know about healthy eating and most of you are very keen on sport and physical activity. You felt that the teachers and adults in the school were helpful to you and we agree.

From talking to the headteacher and other members of staff, observing your lessons, looking at your work and records of your progress and talking to you we learned that:

- yours is a good school
- you do well in both your lessons and your examinations in Year 11
- you are taught well
- the school provides you with interesting work that helps you to broaden both your knowledge and your experience of the world
- you behave well and you show excellent and growing consideration for others and your community
- you are cared for and looked after exceptionally well
- the school is well run.

In order to improve the school further I have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- help you achieve more in English and in science
- find ways to improve the attendance of those with poor attendance. I am sure you can help with this
- make certain that all important messages get passed on between the school and the residential units.