

Lynn Grove VA High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121215
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	301778
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	12–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	899
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Houghton
Headteacher	Mr David Evans
Date of previous school inspection	30 October 2000
School address	Lynn Grove Gorleston Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR31 8AP
Telephone number	01493 661406
Fax number	01493 441386

Age group	12–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Lynn Grove Voluntary Aided High School is a smaller than average comprehensive school in Gorleston, an area that has some deprivation but no worse than is found nationally. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is above the national average. Almost all students come from White British backgrounds; very few have English as a second language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below the national average. Attainment on entry in Year 8 is in line with the national average. It has specialist technology and Training School status and is a Leading Edge school. It is currently being reorganised to receive students in Year 7 in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that Lynn Grove is a good school. It has a good reputation locally for providing a caring and supportive environment in which the majority of students achieve well, are safe and feel valued. Considerable investment in school buildings and learning resources, particularly information and communication technology (ICT) has helped to create ideal conditions for students to learn and to flourish as young people. Students behave well and are respectful towards adults and each other which help to make school an enjoyable and stimulating place to be.

Students enter the school part-way through Key Stage 3 in Year 8 with attainment levels that are broadly similar to those found nationally. The majority make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 9 meet the standards expected of them in English and science. Standards achieved in mathematics are above the national average and have been for the past three years. Students make good progress in Key Stage 4 and achieve standards that are well above the national average. In 2006, 77% of students achieved five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations and almost all students achieved at least five GCSE passes. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve very well due to the high quality care and support they receive.

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection. It has used its specialist technology status to develop a good range of vocational and academic courses in Key Stage 4 that includes an ICT qualification that is equivalent to four good GCSEs. In 2006, 97% of students achieved this award, providing them with a thorough grounding of computer skills and knowledge required to progress onto further education or the world of work. The school has had less of an impact on raising achievement in some aspects of science and design technology. In comparison with other schools nationally, fewer Year 11 students achieved the very highest grades in GCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory and at times good with very little inadequate teaching. This consistency of satisfactory and at times good teaching coupled with good quality care, support and the positive attitudes students have towards their learning, results in the majority of students achieving well. They are able to work independently, in pairs and in groups to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. They have good relationships with teachers and behave well. The quality of teaching and learning is no better than satisfactory because not all teachers plan work that meets the needs of students of different abilities and more able students are not always given work of sufficient challenge. Pockets of good practice exist but teachers' use of assessment information to inform students of how well they are doing and what they need to do to progress further is too variable. Marking is inconsistent and does not always show students what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Parents comment that 'children are given the opportunity to grow spiritually and morally,' and inspectors noticed that students are sociable and have a well established sense of right and wrong. A significant number of older students act as prefects, which enhances the calm and orderly feel to the school. Students enjoy school, attend well and are keen to learn, which makes an important contribution to the progress they make in lessons. The care, guidance and support they receive are good and they know who they can turn to if they feel concerned. Students are generally healthy although curriculum time for physical education (PE) is minimal.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong, visionary leadership and, ably supported by his senior management team gives a clear direction to the work of the school. School self-evaluation is honest and accurate but is not always systematic in analysing the impact of the improvements being made. Lesson monitoring is effective but there is some variability in the quality of feedback given to teachers on how to improve their practice. Subject and pastoral leadership is good but some subject leaders are relatively new in post and have not had sufficient time to demonstrate their full impact. The school ensures that staff receive good quality professional development and this is building good capacity to improve further. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive but say they would like more communication with the school. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and support the school well but play a limited role in monitoring how well the school is performing. The school uses its resources, including staff, particularly effectively so that it provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Achieve greater consistency in how assessment information is used to set clear targets for improvement and to inform learners of exactly what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in national tests and examinations by providing work that challenges all students, including those who are more able.
- Increase the amount of good or better teaching by ensuring lesson monitoring provides teachers with clear, accurate feedback on how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in Key Stage 3 are average. Results in last year's national tests improved in English, declined in science and were above the national average in mathematics. In Key Stage 4, the school has made significant progress in raising standards; a very high proportion of students achieved at least five A* to C grades in last year's examinations and the vast majority of students achieved five GCSE passes, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Progress is good overall; it is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to thrive in mathematics but progress in science and English is less marked. Those studying physics, chemistry and biology achieve very well and attain well above average standards. The school is aware that the number of students achieving at least five A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2006 was slightly lower than the national average and has taken prompt action to improve this. In line with trends nationally, girls attain slightly higher standards than boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are good. The school sets high expectations of its students and prides itself in ensuring that they are safe, healthy and free from harassment so effective learning can take place. This has a direct impact on the progress made in lessons because the vast majority of students behave well, listen attentively to teachers, work hard and apply themselves to their studies. Students told inspectors that they thoroughly enjoy school and feel that very few changes are needed to make it a better place to be. Many students embrace healthy lifestyles and participate in a satisfactory range of sporting activities, although parents feel that there

are more opportunities for boys than girls. Some students contribute to the wider community by supporting the school's work with local residents and performing in drama productions. The school council plays an increasing role in representing students' views and is actively involved in raising money for charity. Students adopt safe practices in and around school and are well prepared for their future economic well-being through the acquisition of a broad range of ICT skills and an effective 'world of work' module in Key Stage 4.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning to be good but inspectors disagree. Lesson observations showed teaching and learning to be satisfactory overall with some notable strengths, such as teachers' subject knowledge, positive relations and the effective use of interactive whiteboards to enhance learning. Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, the majority of students make good progress because they work hard, have positive attitudes towards learning and receive good care and support from teachers and support staff. Classrooms are managed well; lessons start promptly, sometimes with starter activities and students are encouraged to become actively involved in their learning. Teaching assistants provide effective support for learning, particularly for those students with a statement of special educational need. However, not all teachers consider the different needs and abilities of all students in their planning and some more able students are not given work of sufficient challenge. There are some good examples of teachers' assessment of students' progress, such as those developed in music, but it is not consistent across the school. Not all teachers set clear targets for improvement and students are unaware of exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Very few classrooms display National Curriculum levels or examination grades so students know what they are aiming for. The school's own evaluation identifies assessment as an area for improvement, particularly in Key Stage 3.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. All students have opportunities to achieve qualifications in ICT, religious education and design and technology in line with the school's specialist and Voluntary Aided status. A good range of vocational and academic courses is offered to students in Years 10 and 11. The issue of limited indoor space for PE raised in the previous inspection has been addressed and the school now has excellent sports facilities, but curriculum time for PE is minimal. The school provides additional support for a significant number of students in Year 8 who have under-developed literacy skills. The school works very well with other providers to increase the range of curriculum opportunities it can offer for those students more suited to work-based learning. The school is very effective in ensuring students' future economic well-being by giving them relevant skills for employment and by encouraging an exceptionally high proportion of students go on to further education or training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good, which allows students to enjoy their learning and achieve well. They have good relationships with their form tutors and heads of year, trusting them to

resolve any problems effectively. There are rigorous procedures to safeguard students and ensure their safety in school. The school works successfully with a range of outside agencies to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Students told inspectors that they are well-informed about their subject options for GCSE and feel they have made the right choices. Guidance is generally good, although the tracking of students' progress and identification of those at risk of underachieving varies across subjects. Gifted and talented students are clearly identified and have access to suitable enrichment opportunities but they do not always receive the challenge they need in lessons to fully achieve what they are capable of.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior managers have focused resources on raising standards in Key Stage 4, particularly the proportion of students attaining a good number of GCSE pass grades, and have made significant improvements. They recognise that this is now secure and they can shift their focus to ensuring a higher number of students achieve the very highest grades. Senior leaders understand most of the school's strengths and weaknesses but there is some variability in their monitoring of teaching and in the consistent use of data on students' achievements to identify where learning needs improving. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and have worked alongside a chief executive within the leadership team to secure high quality resources that have led to many improvements to the school. However, they do not play a prominent role in monitoring how well the school is performing.

Senior leaders have worked hard to recruit middle managers and to develop existing staff to implement planned improvements. The school uses its specialist status effectively by sharing expertise and its ICT resources such as the 'virtual learning environment' in a number of local schools and provides good value for money.

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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?	2
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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	3
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?	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.

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	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	1
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

16 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Lynn Grove VA High School, Great Yarmouth NR31 8AP

Earlier this term I visited your school with three other inspectors. We talked and listened to you, your teachers and governors. We spent time in lessons, walked around the school during breaks and lunch times and read the many letters from your parents. Throughout all this your behaviour was very good and you made us feel very welcome. We were particularly impressed with the way you respect each other and your teachers, and the way many of you work as prefects to help make your school a calm, orderly and enjoyable place to be. Thank you for your help during our visit.

Lynn Grove is a good school. It provides you with a safe, caring and supportive environment in which to learn. One of the key strengths of the school is the way it promotes the use of information and communication technology to help you learn and give you the relevant skills needed to move into further education or employment. Most of you make good progress in Key Stage 4 and achieve standards that are well above what is achieved nationally, although very few of you achieve the very highest grades in GCSE examinations. Not all of you are aware of your targets and what you need to do to improve. Therefore we have asked senior managers to make the following improvements:

- all teachers set you clear targets for improvement and let you know exactly what you need to do to improve your grades
- provide you with work in lessons that is sufficiently challenging so you can achieve the highest grades in national tests and examinations
- senior managers give teachers clear, accurate feedback on the quality of their lessons and how they can make them even better.

Your headteacher and his senior staff lead and manage your school well. You can help them by letting your school council members know your views on what you feel would improve your school and ask your representative to share these views with them.

Once again, thank you for your kind welcome, we wish you all well.

John Mitcheson Her Majesty's Inspector