

The Latymer School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102055
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	307886
Inspection date	25 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Cathie Munt HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1366
6th form	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Pilsworth
Headteacher	Mr Mark Garbett
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2005
School address	Haselbury Road London N9 9TN
Telephone number	020 8807 4037
Fax number	020 8887 8111

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Introduction

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector carried out the inspection and visited the school for two half days. Inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues: the progress made by different groups, the measures that are being taken to address safety within and without the school and how the school is incorporating the 14- 19 philosophy in its curriculum development. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, the senior team, members of staff, the chair of the governing body, the students, parents, a local primary headteacher and the police officer responsible for school safety in the borough. Parts of some lessons were observed, various documents, including the school's self-evaluation form, were examined and the results from the parents' questionnaires were collated. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Students travel from considerable distances across north London to attend this extremely popular and successful school. The main school and the sixth form are always heavily oversubscribed. Students' attainment on entering the school and the sixth form is higher than average and the proportion with special educational needs is exceptionally low. Almost a half of the students are from minority ethnic groups and about a third of the students speak English as an additional language. Twenty places for students with exceptional musical talent are allocated each year. The school holds many prestigious awards including the international schools award and the Ofsted award for particularly successful schools and colleges 2004/5. It has recently acquired Specialist School Status for art, media and drama.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Latymer is an outstanding school that provides an excellent all-round education for all of its students. Consequently, they develop into mature, confident and likeable young adults. The students, their parents and the school's partners hold it in extremely high regard. A particular strength of the school is the high level of commitment shown by the staff and the senior team to maintaining top class academic standards while continually seeking to widen and enrich the curriculum. One parent commented '...this school is what education is all about', a view echoed in many of the written comments received by the inspectors.

Standards are extremely high in all key stages and have been so consistently over many years. For example, over the last three years the average points score at Key Stage 3 has been more than ten points above the national average and the 2007 GCSE scores were impressively higher than the national average. Students are exceptionally well motivated by the high expectations of the staff and by the school's consistent emphasis on giving of your best in all situations. Two and three-dimensional displays in corridors and classrooms attest to the wide range and high quality of work in all age groups. Students show exceptional intellectual curiosity and are willing to work hard to achieve their academic and creative ambitions. Consequently, their achievement is outstanding and compares well with other selective schools. They make exceptionally good progress in their learning at Key Stage 4. Exceptional provision is made for those students who require additional support either in managing their studies or in catching up on specific aspects of a subject. Students praised the teachers' generosity in finding time to support individuals saying, 'The teachers are willing to give up as much time as they can spare to give you help.' They expressed the opinion that anyone who might be experiencing problems would, undoubtedly, be helped without embarrassment or censure. A Key Stage 3 student said, 'If you don't feel confident about something, it's easy to ask for help'. Older students confirmed that those whose work lags behind have targets for improvement set and their progress is monitored regularly.

Teachers are well qualified in their subjects and in the skills of imparting knowledge and developing a thirst for learning in their students. The school's own data show that the majority of teaching is good or outstanding. Examples of exciting and innovative teaching that challenged the students were seen in English, mathematics, drama and media studies. The school does not rest on its laurels and staff and governors are continually seeking to raise the bar. Departments reflect on their practice and successfully explore ways to move subject boundaries forward and become even more effective. For example, university staff work with some exceptionally able mathematics students. Regular monitoring of lessons, department reviews of students' work and sharply focused in-service training create a secure basis for continually improving the quality of teaching and for moving the small amount of satisfactory teaching to good or better. Excellent relationships engender an atmosphere where personality can develop and learning can flourish. 'My children are lucky to be receiving such an education - their results are good too!' wrote one satisfied mother.

The school is conscious of the need to support enrichment and enjoyment in curriculum provision. A rich and varied programme of studies, including outstanding music provision, and a wide range of additional activities and visits ensure that the curriculum provides an exciting educational diet that is very well adapted to meet the demanding needs of the student population. The wholehearted manner in which they threw themselves into their studies

illustrated clearly that the students enjoy learning and endorsed that the school fulfils its aim, 'that school life should be enjoyed for itself as well as a preparation for the future'.

Students' personal development does not lag behind their academic success. By their enthusiastic responses to the many opportunities offered outside the normal curriculum, students enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and exhibit a high level of confidence and maturity. The school's philosophy strongly supports personal and spiritual growth as well as the development of a sense of responsibility for others. The house system encourages participation, achievement and celebration with others in different year groups and provides leadership opportunities for sixth formers. Students engage with local and global communities by working with youngsters in nearby primary schools and in African schools on trips abroad. Some undertake work in local hospitals and newly arrived sixth formers were most impressed by the range of clubs and societies for example, the Amnesty International group. Older students organise outside speakers to address their self-run societies and show a mature awareness of the demands of the world of work. The school canvasses the students' opinions and they know that their views carry weight.

The school provides outstanding preparation for the students' economic well-being through the high level of achievement in basic and wider ranging skills and by the provision of leadership and management opportunities. A wide range of sport, dance and gymnastic provision and healthy choices in the dining hall support healthy growth and physical well-being. Lessons on how to manage stress and the positive ethos within the school promote a healthy attitude to learning.

A number of parents expressed concerns about safety issues on the way to and from school. While school data indicate that the number of incidents affecting Latymer students has decreased in recent years, the staff and governors take this matter very seriously and the school continues to work in close co-operation with the local police. Staying safe in the environment is dealt with at length in detailed school publications, in assemblies and in Personal, Social and Health Education lessons. Students feel very safe within the school and are most adamant that neither the students nor the staff tolerate unacceptable behaviour.

Work as a specialist college is of a high quality. The impact of the school's specialist status is developing rapidly and, rightly, this is seen as the focus for continuing development. Managers work well with a wide range of partners, using the school's specialist status most effectively to promote high quality educational opportunities in local primary and secondary special schools. They are sharing Latymer teachers' skills and expertise, as well as the school's copious resources, to good effect. A local primary headteacher praised the creative input to developing a wider art curriculum. Latymer students also benefit as they often lead sessions for younger pupils. The borough's young musicians gain greatly from the Saturday morning music school.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The headteacher's enthusiasm and vision engages the staff, pupils and parents and creates an atmosphere where managers can grow and develop their potential. A strong senior team supports the headteacher admirably and all have a clear and valued role to play. Relationships with parents are very positive and good account is taken of their views. There are no significant weaknesses in the school. Its excellent capacity to improve is exemplified by the exceptionally high students' outcomes and by the strength of its strategic planning. This has enabled the governors, with outstanding financial support from the parent body, to provide excellent accommodation for science, information technology, the performing arts and sport over the last few years. Knowledgeable

and able governors know the school exceptionally well and provide a most effective balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and the senior team.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The Latymer School has an outstanding sixth form. The students develop into mature and likeable young adults who very much appreciate the excellent education the school offers them. Students who have joined the school in the sixth form have integrated well. They appreciate the high quality of teaching and the outstanding opportunities presented to them as much as their peers who transferred from the main school. Academic standards are very high when compared with national results. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent with work that is challenging and interesting. Consequently, students maintain the very high standards they achieved in GCSE. They understand that they are expected to work independently and to take responsibility for their work but they are also confident that they will be given the help they need and that their progress will be closely monitored. The curriculum meets their needs and aspirations very well and in addition to academic courses, sixth formers have access to a very wide range of activities. They also play a significant role in the school as a whole. They are consulted by senior managers and have made a useful contribution to developing the staff understanding of effective teaching and learning. Virtually all students go on to higher education, usually to their first choice of university. They receive very good guidance on preparing their applications. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent and provide a very secure foundation for the education offered.

What the school should do to improve further

- To use the skill and expertise within the school to benefit the local community and further enrich the school curriculum.

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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	16-19
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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
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	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

06 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Latymer School, London, N9 9TN

Thank you all for the warm welcome that we received when we visited your school recently. We were most impressed by your maturity, pleasant manners and confidence when discussing a wide range of topics. You certainly know your school well and are proud and active participants in it. I am sure that most of you will read the whole report but this letter notes the main points that we made.

We agree with you, your parents, the staff and the governors that yours is an outstanding school that gives you an excellent all round education and prepares you extremely well for university and the world of work. Your school really believes that learning should be enjoyable and your teachers make lessons lively and challenging. You make the most of the many academic, social and work related opportunities provided and give 100% effort in everything that you do. As a result, you enjoy school, do really well in class and get high grades in your exams. You play as hard as you work. You told me how much you enjoy the huge variety of clubs and trips that let you do such things as debating, travelling, playing chess and singing.

You have a strong sense of responsibility and many of you support younger students in a variety of ways. You also work with pupils in local primary schools sharing your musical, sports and dance skills. Many of you support worldwide charities and help less fortunate children in other countries.

A number of your parents expressed concerns about your journeys to school. You have listened well to the advice given to you by your teachers and the police and incidents affecting Latymer students have decreased over the last three years. Continue to be vigilant. The staff are very concerned for your welfare in and out of school and are in close touch with the local police.

The headteacher, staff and governors lead and manage your school extremely well; so well, in fact, that they are able to use the site and the teachers' expertise to help other schools. Recently, Latymer has become a specialist college. We have suggested that the school continues to use its expertise and resources to support projects in the local area and to enrich further your curriculum opportunities.

We wish you well for the future,

Catherine Munt

Her Majesty's Inspector