

The Lakes School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112379
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310871
Inspection dates	10–11 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Cox

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	675
6th form	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Stephenson
Headteacher	Dr David Selby
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	Troutbeck Bridge Windermere Cumbria LA23 1HW
Telephone number	01539 462470
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector on secondment to Ofsted and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Lakes School is situated near Windermere in the Lake District. The school is smaller than the average although it includes a sixth form which is large when compared to the rest of the school. A high proportion of students stay on to the sixth form where they are joined by students from other schools. The majority of students are of White British heritage. They live in an area of general social advantage although a number are affected by rural isolation and/or disadvantage. There are very few who have English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number who has a statement of educational need. The school gained Sports College status in September 2004, had Sportsmark accreditation renewed in 2007 and has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Lakes school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Recent improvements are impacting positively on the school. There is growing strength in teaching and learning, students' care, guidance and support and the curriculum.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Students' learning is good overall because of much good teaching. The challenge in some outstanding lessons meant students achieved well. However, the quality of teaching is not consistent for all students. The improving accuracy of assessment and monitoring information by the school, which has been moderated by the local authority, places the current Year 9 and Year 11 students firmly on track to exceed national averages when compared to 2007. The school sets challenging targets for its students.

The Sports College Specialism adds significantly to the quality of the curriculum in the range of extra-curricular activities that many, particularly the younger students, take part in. It has also provided resources for other subjects including sport related literature in English to help increase boys' interest and skills in literacy. The school's collaboration with the South Lakes Federation and a local further education college provides an enhanced curriculum.

Students' personal development and well-being is overall, satisfactory. Attendance is good and has improved because of the focused work done by the school. Behaviour is satisfactory and often good when the teaching is challenging and engaging. No student has been permanently excluded from the school for a number of years. However, there is a high incidence of fixed term exclusions. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory and supported by regular whole school assemblies where important issues are addressed with humour and creativity.

Care, guidance and support are a strength of this small school. Support staff are deployed well, helping students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who progress in line with others. When joining the school in Year 7, students talk of how quickly they begin to 'feel at home.' A large proportion of students stay on in the sixth form because they know their teachers and fellow students well. Students from other schools who are new to the sixth form settle quickly.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently strengthened senior leadership team is beginning to drive through improvements, especially in the quality of teaching and learning. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further and to resolve the inconsistencies in practice especially in the use of information from monitoring to identify where action is needed. The quality of some middle management is too variable to ensure that improvements are carried through at the same rate by all. Governance is a strength as is the collaborative work undertaken with the South Lakes Federation and the local authority.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy being in the sixth form, attend school regularly and have mature attitudes to learning. They are knowledgeable about leading a healthy lifestyle, take on a range of responsibilities and contribute willingly to the school and the wider community. Students join the sixth form with standards which are close to average and most progress satisfactorily. Examination pass rates are average. Most teaching is good. However, the pace of learning in some lessons is slow because teachers' expectations of students' capabilities are too low and this restricts progress.

Students rightly believe they are well cared for and supported. Retention rates are good. The academic guidance they receive is satisfactory. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and appropriate priorities for development, such as the need to improve the tracking of students' progress against their targets, have been identified. Given students' satisfactory achievement and good attitudes, the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the systems of monitoring and evaluating students' performance are applied consistently across the school and that the information helps raise achievement and standards.
- Improve the rigour of leadership and management at all levels to ensure greater accountability and consistency of practice.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Students come to the school with broadly average standards overall. The standards reached at the end of Year 11 in 2007 met the national expectation overall. Nearly all students left with at least one pass at GCSE or equivalent. The proportion leaving with five or more passes at GCSE was above the national average. Students leaving with 5 A* to C grades including English and mathematics was slightly above the national average but not as high as in previous years. Those leaving school with five or more good passes at GCSE was slightly better than the national average. Standards at Key Stage 3 in 2007 in English, mathematics and science were overall average. Standards in the sixth form compare well with other schools in the area, although are seen as average when set in the national context.

Progress of students across the school in 2007 was in line with national expectations. However, evidence seen in lessons, including the sixth form and from the accurate systems the school has for monitoring students' progress against challenging targets, indicate progress is now better than satisfactory and is good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress in line with others in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form. Generally, students have positive attitudes and are often enthusiastic about what the school has to offer. Almost all students conduct themselves well around school and in lessons. The behaviour of a few leads to them being excluded for short periods and disrupts their learning. The school has been active in developing a safe, secure working environment in which the great majority of students respect each other and the school staff. Students say they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. They comment that there are

relatively few incidents of bullying and those that do occur are dealt with effectively. Attendance has improved and is now good.

Students lead healthy lifestyles. The school council helped get water fountains installed around school. A high proportion of students take part in and enjoy a good range of sporting activities, both during and after school. The comprehensive programme of personal, health and social education (PHSE) enables them to adopt responsible attitudes to learning and to understand the importance of being good citizens. The programme leads to effective social and moral education by input from visiting speakers such as the police, fire service and the citizen's advice bureau. Spiritual and cultural education are satisfactory. The school is beginning to extend its current programme to strengthen awareness of ethnic traditions in the wider community.

Year 7 students show a strong commitment to the international community through fund raising for Oxfam. However, this is an isolated response rather than being part of a whole school plan to improve the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, and some lessons seen in the main school were outstanding. The recently introduced teaching and learning strategies are beginning to have a positive impact across all key stages on the level of challenge provided by teachers and on students' attitudes to learning. The quality of learning has improved this year because the school has begun to focus more determinedly on students' progress. Teachers set challenging targets to ensure all students make expected progress. In the best lessons, teachers know the subject matter well and provide a range of well designed tasks that help students learn in variety of ways. In one such English lesson, students worked with maps, verse and photographic images to reinforce their understanding of multicultural poetry. Teachers engage students through interesting activities and provide helpful feedback, indicating clearly what students need to do in order to improve. In the less successful lessons, activities are not planned sufficiently well to ensure that students of all abilities are challenged to reach their full potential. Students' prior learning is not taken into account and there is a lack of opportunity for independent learning which slows progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a good curriculum in the main school and the sixth form. It is enhanced by the specialist status in sport. Alongside traditional GCSE subjects, a wide range of vocational courses has been developed through the successful partnership with the South Lakes Federation which includes a local college. Courses on offer include hospitality and catering which, given the locality of the school, reflect the needs of the local community. Work related skills are developed in Key Stage 3 through teamwork activities in mathematics and the well received 'Dragons Den' competition in English. In Year 9, students are encouraged to shadow a relative for one day at their place of work to gain further understanding and experience. This gives the students an appreciation of what to expect in Year 10 when they participate in work experience.

At Key Stage 4, students develop skills in personal effectiveness through an accredited course. A wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities is available. Participation is good, although older students are less inclined to be involved, particularly when paid part-time employment is on offer in the busy tourist season. The Living for Sport scheme has helped to reduce the incidents of poor attitudes and behaviour of some students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good in the main school and the sixth form. Arrangements for child protection and ensuring safety in school are met and are reviewed regularly. Students' welfare is a high priority for staff and this contributes well to students' personal development. Those who have any difficulties with learning are well supported by teaching assistants in class or are helped by withdrawal for specialist teaching in small groups. Attendance has improved. The school has strong links with local providers who offer vocational alternatives for a small number of students. The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle through, outdoor adventure and enrichment activities closely allied to the sports specialism. The school's induction procedures are effective in helping students settle quickly. Transfer to the sixth form is smooth. There are good arrangements in school and with other agencies giving advice on courses and career options. Teachers tell students how much progress they are making and students know their targets. However, the application of the marking system across all subjects is inconsistent. Teachers track student progress and put in place measures to address any underperformance. This is contributing positively to the rise in progress observed.

Students in the sixth form speak well of the guidance and support they receive, particularly in preparation for university and college life. They say they would welcome more help on completing the admissions forms to university and a greater understanding of budgeting and managing student finance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The governors and headteacher have worked relentlessly to reduce the large budget deficit. The school's limited resources are effectively deployed and it provides satisfactory value for money. Governors provide good support. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and hold the leadership team to account for improvements. The leadership team is relatively newly formed and has begun to address the inconsistencies of practice across the school. However, the current processes of holding to account some middle leaders to secure further improvements in achievement and standards, lacks challenge. The school's self-evaluation is currently satisfactory but improving as monitoring information is evaluated more robustly and judgements become sharper. This is helping the school to identify the areas that can best contribute to improvement.

Improvement since the last inspection has been made. The local authority and the school's active involvement with the South Lakes Federation have provided focused and structured

support in a number of areas. As a result progress towards challenging targets has been good across the school and particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4. The school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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	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?	3	3
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?	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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	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

14 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Lakes School, Cumbria, LA23 1HW

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we recently inspected your school. We are pleased to be able to share our findings with you.

Overall, we judged The Lakes School to be satisfactory.

The headteacher and his staff are working hard to improve your school. Many new things have already begun. It is good to see that the pastoral care provided to you is a strength and that the school sets you challenging targets. Your teachers and governors are working hard to provide the best education for you. To help them in this we have asked them to concentrate on two areas for improvement:

- ensure the systems for tracking your progress are consistent across all subjects so that you and the school know how well you are doing
- improve the rigour of leadership and management at all levels to ensure accountability and consistency of practice. There are strengths within the leadership and management of the school and in subject areas but this is patchy.

With your mature outlook and willingness to do well in all subjects, I am sure you will help your school to go from strength-to-strength. Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely

Peter Cox

Lead inspector