

Lady Manners School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112996
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	311082
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1507
6th form	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C D Coe
Headteacher	Mr A D Meikle
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	Shutts Lane Bakewell Derbyshire DE45 1JA
Telephone number	01629 812671
Fax number	01629 813883

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress that students make through the school; the evidence to support the school's judgement that the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding; and the effectiveness of subject leaders in promoting and sustaining the progress and higher standards of students. Evidence was gathered from observing work in classrooms; scrutinising school documentation, records of achievement and progress, and parental questionnaires. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders and with students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a large, growing and popular school. It serves students from the town and adjoining rural areas. They join the school with levels of attainment that are generally above those expected nationally. A lower than average percentage of students have learning difficulties and disabilities or a statement of special educational need. The vast majority are White British and speak English as their first language. The school achieved International School Intermediate status in January 2008. It holds the Healthy Schools award, Artsmark (Silver) and the Financial Management Standards in Schools. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2006 and new appointments have been made to the senior management team since then. The accommodation dates from 1936 and the newest buildings were constructed in 2005. A rolling programme of improvements is in place to ensure the accommodation meets the needs of the evolving curriculum.

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. It gives students a thorough education, which prepares them well for the next stage of their lives. Parents agree: one describes the school as having, 'A wonderful atmosphere and a hard-working environment which clearly strives to help students achieve their personal objectives'.

The new leadership and management team is successfully steering the school forward because it accurately identifies its key strengths. With the assistance of staff and governors, it is methodically and successfully addressing areas for improvement. Consequently, the school has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in the expansion of the curriculum. The school's improvement plan, to which well-informed governors make a meaningful contribution, provides clear direction. Specific responsibilities of senior staff cover all aspects of the school's work and are helping to ensure that improvements in progress are sustainable. Leadership and management are good at all levels. Although some middle leaders are having greater impact than others, good teamwork and the commitment of all staff strengthen the school's performance and lead to students' good progress and the school's good capacity to improve.

Students of all abilities make good progress throughout the school from their starting points. They attain well above average standards by the end of Year 11. The progress of students is good through Key Stage 3. The good progress they make in mathematics throughout the school is aided by well-established monitoring and support programmes. Progress in English, which was satisfactory in 2007, is now good because of improved support for students. They are poised to reach challenging targets in GCSE results in 2008, rising further from those of 2007. An above-average percentage of students, compared to nationally, are expected to achieve the highest grade in a significant number of subjects, as they did in 2007.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Although teaching varies between subjects and some is satisfactory, the majority of teaching is good and leads to good progress. Students know the purpose of lessons because learning objectives are shared with them and are revisited regularly. In most lessons, the pace is brisk, students are involved in their learning and tasks offer a good level of challenge. Above all, students enjoy the lessons in which they are fully involved, for example, when they work in pairs. However, some lessons are over-directed by teachers. The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the positive relationships between students and staff promote learning well. Marking, though, is inconsistent across subjects and teachers. Too often it fails to inform students of their achievements in lessons or how to improve their work.

The courses which cover learning styles and critical thinking skills in Years 7 and 8 are important in setting the scene for students' good progress. They are one aspect of the good curriculum, which is increasingly meeting the interests and aspirations of learners in both key stages. Provision of vocational courses, including links with a local college and work place learning for a small number of students, is being carefully developed and is promoting more relevance and enjoyment of learning for those whose interests are in developing practical, work related skills. The wide range of courses ensure a breadth and balance to learning and enable students of all abilities to pursue their interests. Arrangements for students who find learning difficult are structured to ensure a clear focus on improving their basic skills. Careers advice ensures that students have appropriate skills and knowledge to make informed choices about their futures.

Students speak highly of the 'themed' months and enterprise activities, which enable them to transfer their skills across subjects. They effectively use the inter-personal skills which they gain through the informative personal, social and health education programme to promote their outstanding personal development. Students are delighted with the excellent range of after-school clubs and enhancement activities, which enable a very high proportion of students to broaden their skills and interests.

Students enjoy school greatly, with a sixth form student describing her time here as, 'The best seven years of my life.' There is a bustle about the place, because students are busy and involved. They embrace many opportunities to take responsibility, such as in the school council, helping pupils in other schools and by enterprise activities. Such activities contribute extremely effectively to students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The above average standards they achieve ensure they are well prepared for the world of work, backed up by their above average attendance and good behaviour. Bullying is infrequent and staff deal promptly with it, so that students are reassured and feel safe. The school promotes healthy lifestyles as part of the curriculum and students are increasingly eating healthily and keeping fit. Assemblies and lessons promote students' spiritual development effectively. Their cultural understanding is quite sophisticated, due to a great variety of stimulating experiences, including the Hiroshima project and links with Japanese and Czech schools. Students' concern for others shows in regular fund raising initiatives and their active involvement in the local community.

The care, guidance and support of students are good because effective systems promote their well-being, safety and engagement in school life. For example, the number of exclusions has reduced significantly since the last inspection. Despite the school's large size, students feel well supported by staff, which contributes to students' happiness and sense of security. Parents are involved and are well informed. Excellent arrangements for students to start and leave the school enable them to settle quickly to learning and to leave with confidence. Academic guidance is carefully coordinated. Appropriate activities support students well, including those who find learning difficult. However, although targets are set, and some students know them, they do not feature in many lessons, and their impact on progress is less than it could be. The provision and support of students with particular gifts and talents are planned particularly well to enhance their individual strengths and to help them to achieve their potential.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students are making good progress in the sixth form. The school's tracking systems indicate that students will achieve above average standards at AS and A-level in 2008. This represents an improvement on broadly average results in 2007 and the satisfactory progress that students made in the last academic year. It is attributable to good teaching and learning, based on excellent relationships, a good level of challenge and teachers' outstanding subject knowledge. The good curriculum offers students a wide choice of advanced courses. The range of vocational courses at Levels 2 and 3 is limited and an area that the school is developing. There is a suitably varied range of extra-curricular activities in the extended lunch break.

There are many examples of students' outstanding personal development. Students are committed to learning and they develop excellent social skills. They make an outstanding contribution to the community, including considerable fund raising for charities. They help younger students with a wide variety of activities, including being buddies to them and through 'form link'. They play a leading part in the school council and run their own sixth form committee.

The sixth form is well led and managed. Effective organisation provides students with clear expectations of learning and study, but also helps and encourages them to think independently and develop their own thinking. This is strengthened by the outstanding care, guidance and support that they are given prior to entering the sixth form, at the end of Year 12 and on leaving for employment or higher education. They have particular praise for 'some really committed teachers' who give them outstanding support for coursework and help them to improve their work with thorough marking.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking throughout the school regularly informs students of their achievements and what they need to do to improve.
- Make sure that all students know their academic targets; make these integral to lessons and effective tools to promote students' progress.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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?	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	2	
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	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	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?	2	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	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	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

22 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Lady Manners School, Bakewell, DE45 1JA

I am writing to thank you for your cooperation and friendliness during our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed our discussions with you, which enabled us to learn a lot about the education that you receive here. This letter will inform you of our judgements about the school and the sixth form.

You express pride in your school and rightly so. It is a good school and prepares you well for the next stage of your lives. This is helped by the excellent opportunities that you are given to take responsibility, work in teams and to be leaders. They are important factors in your outstanding personal development through the school and in the sixth form. You make good progress, with the help of good teaching and effective guidance and support, including for those of you who sometimes find learning difficult. We agree with the sixth form students that their care, guidance and support are outstanding. The standards that you reach are improving. They are above average at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and post 16 and rising.

Staff provide a very varied programme of activities for those of you who have particular gifts or talents. This is just one example of the good curriculum. Older students told us that it is improving and is more varied. You say that learning is often fun, particularly when you are able to learn through themes. You are absolutely delighted with the very wide choice of clubs and after school activities.

Your headteacher and the staff are constantly working to improve your school, which is well led and managed. They agree that the school can be even better. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that marking tells you very regularly what you have achieved in your work and what you need to do to improve it. We were pleased to find that you have targets, but a lot of you are unsure of what they are and they are not often a major focus in lessons. Addressing these issues should help you to make more rapid progress.

We were impressed with your attitudes towards school and learning, and hope that you will work with your teachers to make these improvements work.

I send you our very best wishes for the future.

Mrs Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector