

# Litcham High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121168
<b>Local Authority</b>	NORFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	313904
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Mitcheson HMI

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	572
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Canon Brian Cole
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jeremy Nicholls
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Church Street Litcham Kings Lynn PE32 2NS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01328701265
<b>Fax number</b>	01328701850

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## Introduction

On this one day inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors investigated the following issues in detail: teaching and learning, personal development and well being, care guidance and support, leadership and management and the school's specialist status in science, languages and sport. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records. Other evidence included the scrutiny of curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school's work, interviews with staff and students and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but HMI found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included in the report.

## Description of the school

Litcham High School is a smaller than average 11 to 16 year old mixed comprehensive serving a largely rural community in North Norfolk. The majority of its 572 students come from favourable backgrounds and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few students come from minority ethnic groups or have English as an additional language. A significant number of students have learning difficulties and disabilities and a larger than average proportion has a statement of special educational need. The school has a larger than average number of looked after children. Attainment on entry to the school is average. The school is a specialist science and languages college and from this year is developing a further specialism in sport. The school holds the Sportsmark and Investors in People awards and is regularly over-subscribed.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The inspection of Litcham High School confirmed its own evaluation; it is a good school with many outstanding features. The school provides exceptionally good care, guidance and support for all of its students, creating an environment in which the majority achieve outstanding results. Students enthuse about life in school and the vast majority of parents speak favourably about the school.

Procedures for supporting students' transition from primary to secondary school are outstanding. Teachers make regular visits and a wealth of information is shared between schools and with parents so, by the time students arrive in Year 7, they know their new teachers and teachers know them. They fully understand the high expectations of them and benefit greatly from being grouped together with students of similar ability and interests. The support they receive from teachers and older pupil mentors is highly valued by students and parents, one parent commenting that 'the transition from primary school to senior school was excellent and therefore my daughter has settled in very quickly and easily with no concerns'.

In this caring environment, students flourish and make exceptional progress. Key Stage 3 standards are well above the national average; students achieve particularly well in science, reflecting the school's strength as a specialist science college. In Key Stage 4 standards are well above average and have been for the past 4 years. In 2007, 74% of students attained five or more A\* to C grades and 95% achieved five or more GCSE's. In the past few years, a higher than average proportion of students have attained five GCSE A\* to C grades including English and mathematics and almost every student leaves school with at least one GCSE. Results in GCSE French and Physical Education have improved significantly this year and an increasing number of students are choosing to study languages. Relatively few students attain the A\* grade in GCSE examinations. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities thrive and make exceptional progress due to the good quality care and support they receive.

Students' enjoyment of school is shown in their attendance, which is consistently above the national average. They say that due to the school's small size everyone knows each other, that it's a friendly and safe place to be and the few incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Students' attitudes are very positive and behaviour in lessons and at break-times is very good. There is no school council but students feel that their views are listened to, and are acted upon. Senior students are selected to supervise and help others, and this year a significant number are developing their leadership skills by acting as junior sports leaders or pursuing the Duke of Edinburgh's award. Many students regularly participate in an extensive enrichment programme that contributes to their enjoyment and achievement. The 'school house' coordinates an outstanding range of personal, social and emotional support for students, including advice on careers, sexual health and substance mis-use. Students value these extended services and say there is always someone to talk to. Many parents use the centre as the first point of call if they have concerns about the welfare of their children. All arrangements to safeguard students are in place.

Students achieve high standards as a direct result of high quality care coupled with good quality teaching and learning. Experienced teachers have good relations with students and combine their good subject knowledge with a thorough understanding of GCSE examination requirements to teach interesting and challenging lessons. Information and communication technology is used effectively to engage student interest and although teachers' marking is variable, students

know what they have to do to improve their work and attain the targets set for them. School leaders acknowledge that some lessons are not as effective as they should be, but their understanding of where individual teachers' strengths and areas for development lie is limited because very little lesson monitoring takes place.

A satisfactory curriculum provides a broad range of GCSE courses that suits the majority of students who wish to study A-level courses in local sixth forms. Specialist status is beginning to aid the development of a broader curriculum, albeit at a steady rate, but currently there are too few opportunities for those students not suited to GCSE studies to pursue vocational learning. Citizenship is taught on a weekly basis but some Year 11 students do not have weekly religious education lessons. The school is beginning to resolve this issue and plans are currently under way to ensure all students receive their full entitlement. Most students adopt healthy lifestyles by eating sensibly and by participating in regular physical activity, but curriculum time for PE is minimal in Key Stage 4 and the school is unclear which students participate in at least two hours of PE and sport on a weekly basis, as national guidance implies they should.

A relatively new headteacher is in a good position to build on the many strengths of the school and make it an outstanding one. Exceptionally high standards have been sustained and the needs of all students, including an increasing number of looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully met. The senior leadership team has steered the school through re-designation as a specialist science college and extended the schools' specialisms into languages and sport, a notable achievement. However, the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders lack clarity and there is an insufficient focus on improving further teaching and learning. Governors have ensured that the school provides good value for money and has maintained its good reputation locally. Their contribution towards school self-evaluation is minimal; judgements are largely accurate but some are too generous. The majority of subject leaders are very effective; they are focused on meeting challenging targets and maintaining outstanding results, but some development plans lack accurate, measurable targets for further improvement.

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

- Complement the existing curriculum by introducing new opportunities for vocational learning.
- Add further rigour to the monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning so that more students can achieve the very highest grades.

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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
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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

13 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Litcham High School, Litcham PE32 2NS

Earlier this term I visited your school and found it to be a good school with many outstanding features.

Your input was vital in helping me to make this judgement, so thank you for allowing me to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you. I also spent some time meeting with your senior teachers and the chair of governors, and read many letters from parents. Throughout my day in your school, your behaviour was very good and you made me feel welcome. I was greatly impressed with many aspects of the school, including the exceptionally high standards achieved and the outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides for you. The 'school house' provides an outstanding range of extended services to promote your well-being and the support for students with learning difficulties are excellent. The way the school supports your transfer from primary to secondary school is also outstanding and contributes greatly to your welfare and the ethos of the school.

Your enjoyment in school life is shown by your regular attendance, the willingness of many of you to take responsibility as senior students, to mentor younger pupils and to cooperate with members of staff and other students. Teachers help you very much by caring for you, by providing a wealth of clubs, activities and visits for you to take part in, and by planning lessons that stimulate your interest.

I have asked your senior teachers do two things to improve the school further.

- Complement the existing curriculum by introducing new opportunities for those of you who would like to study vocational courses.
- Monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning so that you can achieve the very highest grades in GCSE examinations.

Thank you for your help and best wishes for the future.

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector