

Lavington School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126497
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315573
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Tom Winskill 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	685
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Brooks
Headteacher	Martin Watson
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	The Spring Market Lavington Devizes SN10 4EB
Telephone number	01380 812352
Fax number	01380 818492

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: raising achievement in Key Stage 4 and how effectively the school uses self-evaluation, assessment and academic guidance to meet students' needs, including those of students from service families. Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons; discussions with students, school leaders and teachers; parents' views; and an analysis of school and local authority data. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector 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 this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the adjoining villages of Market Lavington and West Lavington on the northern edge of Salisbury plain and other villages in the surrounding rural area. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Fewer than 3% of the students are from families with one or both parents/carers in the armed forces. The school has had mathematics and computing specialist status since 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching and learning and excellent care, guidance and support help students to thrive. As a result, their achievement and personal development and well-being are outstanding. This is because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior team, working closely with highly effective subject and pastoral leaders. Together they are improving all aspects of the school's work and creating a distinctive ethos and character much appreciated by students and parents. One parent commented, 'The community spirit at Lavington School is wonderful and strong. Children are encouraged to think for themselves and to be proud and confident. I enjoy the holistic approach Lavington offers.' But what do students think? The inspector's discussion with a group of Year 10 and 11 students was going well. Lively, confident, interested, happy and well-motivated students were giving an honest, well-articulated and highly positive view of their school. They enjoy school, where they feel safe and part of a strong, friendly, tolerant community. They know what they are expected to achieve and how to do it and have high expectations of their teachers. Their views are valued and respected and are helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The inspector then enquired as to what were the weaknesses, the negative points. For a short time there was silence! It was the only question students were unable to answer.

Standards are well above average in both key stages and have been consistently so for the last three years in Key Stage 3. Standards in Key Stage 4, as shown by the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C in 2007, were well above average. The school has tackled problems in subjects where standards were below expectation in 2007 and further improved the quality of teaching in Key Stage 4. As a result, standards in the current Key Stage 4 are higher still. These students' attainment on entry was broadly average, so they are making outstanding progress towards the challenging targets they are set. Parents appreciate the focus on academic achievement. Reflecting the views expressed by many, one parent commented, 'I cannot speak highly enough of Lavington School. My child enjoys school and is making very good progress in all subjects, and I feel this is due to the excellent tuition and support she receives from the dedicated staff.' Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities meet, and often exceed, challenging targets as a result of the excellent support they receive. Students from service families achieve in line with the rest of the school. They are not subject to the frequent changes of school sometimes associated with service families, so benefit consistently from the excellent provision at Lavington.

Teaching and learning are good and improving, with outstanding features. Teachers exhibit good subject knowledge and make clear what students are expected to learn. Their enthusiasm helps to motivate students. Students enjoy the good range of activities provided in lessons, including using interactive whiteboards, working in groups and taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, students worked well in groups to plan an experiment. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, effective use of the interactive whiteboard took students at a brisk pace through some challenging problems revealed by analysis of recent test results. Students then followed this up with work they selected themselves to improve their understanding in aspects they found most difficult. An outstanding feature of teaching and learning is the consistent use of assessment information to ensure students understand how well they are doing and how to improve in order to achieve or exceed their target grades. Students are given clear specific guidance on how to gain particular grades for key pieces of work in each subject. This guidance, together with highly effective target setting and a

curriculum which increasingly meets their needs extremely well, makes a strong contribution to their outstanding progress. In some cases, however, the needs of students with differing abilities are not fully met in the classroom. Systematic, detailed monitoring and tracking of students' progress ensures underachievement is identified and tackled effectively by both subject and pastoral staff.

Parents appreciate the quality of teaching and recognise the school's many other strengths, as in this comment: 'Teaching and learning is first rate and the pastoral care provided is excellent. Additionally, children are given the opportunity to contribute to other aspects of school life ensuring they are fully developed and therefore maximising their life chances.' Students embrace fully the opportunities to develop leadership skills and contribute to the school and wider communities. Their high standards in mathematics and English, their ability to work well together, excellent attendance and good careers guidance all help prepare them well for life after Lavington. The school is implementing appropriate plans to improve students' information and communication technology skills and their understanding of the world of work. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are outstanding. They have excellent working relationships with staff, based on mutual respect and a desire to do well. Students' behaviour around school at break and lunchtime is good and often exemplary. Many enjoy the wide range of sporting and other activities provided. The curriculum provides students with a good understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and many appreciate the healthy food in the school canteen. The curriculum, including the assembly programme, makes an excellent contribution to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide crystal clear, high expectations for the school. For example, all students are set targets for each subject which are challenging. Consistent systematic improvement plans are set in train so all areas of the school can help students achieve these targets. The majority of subject and pastoral leadership is good, and some is outstanding. This consistent high-quality leadership ensures that weaknesses are tackled rigorously. Improvements are based on highly effective self-evaluation. For example, senior and subject leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning by analysing students' performance data, taking account of students' views of teaching and learning and implementing a robust system of lesson observations. In addition, a highly effective programme of professional development improves teaching and learning successfully by using the expertise within the school effectively. The school's specialist status has led to improvements in the provision for information and communication technology and improved the curriculum in mathematics. The governing body has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and recognises that it does not have sufficiently well developed links with subjects and other specific aspects of the school's work. The improvements in target setting, monitoring and tracking of students' progress, and teaching and learning since the last inspection and the highly effective procedures for self-evaluation ensure the school's capacity for further improvement is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and implement a wider range of strategies to meet the needs of students of different ability in the classroom.

Annex A

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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
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
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	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 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Lavington School, Market Lavington SN10 4EB

I inspected your school recently and would like to thank all of you who contributed to the inspection by talking with me and letting me see your work in lessons. I am writing to inform you of my findings.

Lavington is an outstanding school. Your excellent behaviour, positive attitudes and friendly tolerant approach to each other all contribute to the strong safe community at your school. You make excellent progress and achieve high standards. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes outstanding, so that you do very well. The school makes sure you all know what you should achieve, how well you are doing and how to improve in all of your subjects. You enjoy your lessons and a wide range of other activities. You get on well with staff and make an important contribution to improving teaching and learning. You rightly appreciate the outstanding care, support and guidance you receive.

Your excellent headteacher and his senior staff ensure the school continually improves its provision for you. They work well with the strong team of subject leaders and pastoral heads. Together, they have an excellent understanding of the school's many strengths and they are tackling those few areas where there is room for improvement. This understanding and the track record of recent improvements mean the school is very well placed to go from strength to strength. I have asked the school to make one important improvement:

- Ensure that teachers provide a variety of ways for students of different ability to make progress in lessons.

I thoroughly enjoyed my two days in your school and I wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully Tom Winskill Her Majesty's Inspector

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