

Lode Heath School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104113
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323968
Inspection date	3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Victoria Godley

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 (total)	1032
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rhys Jones
Headteacher	John Burton
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
School address	Lode Lane Solihull B91 2HW
Telephone number	0121 704 1421
Fax number	0121 711 2663

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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:

- whether the quality of teaching is good or outstanding
- how well the curriculum meets students' individual needs
- the contribution made by middle leaders to whole-school development.

Evidence was gathered through lesson observations, work scrutiny, discussions with students, senior leaders and managers, and the chair of governors and analysis of current performance data. 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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Lode Heath School is a popular school that is heavily oversubscribed. Most students are of White British backgrounds. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school was successfully redesignated as a sports specialist school in October 2007 and was awarded high performing specialist school status in December 2007. A second specialism, in science, has been awarded to commence from April 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lode Heath School is an outstanding school. Students make excellent progress and achieve high standards. Students of all abilities achieve success because of their outstanding personal development and the high quality care, guidance and support they receive. The capacity of the school to maintain a high quality education and to continually take action to improve is outstanding.

Students' attainment when they join the school is broadly average, and they make outstanding overall progress from this starting point. This is the case for all students. In Key Stage 3, progress has improved considerably since 2007 and is now good, but it greatly accelerates in Key Stage 4. The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics is exceptionally high, and every student achieved at least one pass last year. Standards have continued to rise at a sharp rate for the past four years and this demonstrates outstanding achievement. Students achieve especially well in religious education, English literature, leisure and tourism, German, mathematics and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) sport.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. This was confirmed by parents' very positive responses to the inspection questionnaire. Behaviour is exemplary and students clearly enjoy their education. They appreciate the high quality of lessons, and the excellent and stimulating range of sporting, cultural and other activities that take place in class and after school. Safety has an appropriately high priority. For example, a bully box, trained counsellors and proactive prefects support students' opinion that the school responds well to any incidents. Lode Heath School encourages students to respect both themselves and others from the time of their induction to the school.

Students understand very well how to lead healthy lives. Exceptionally high numbers of students take part in sports activities, choose healthy food and explore their feelings through good personal, social and health education lessons. Immersion days have helped students become more aware of living in a multicultural society. For example, Year 7 took part in a host of activities to understand the faiths, religions and cultural needs of their local and national communities and a range of students regularly lead assemblies. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously. It has initiated the development of a memorial garden and continuously raises funds to support local and national charities. Students relish the opportunity to take responsibility. They took part in the elections for a national Youth Parliament and have their own representative on the Solihull Youth Parliament. Most students are involved with the wider community through opportunities to work in local primary schools. Work experience, enterprise activities such as the creativity festival, and high academic standards prepare students very well for their future economic well-being.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall, and exceptionally well-developed attitudes to learning permeate the whole school. This results in outstanding progress by all groups of learners, particularly in Key Stage 4. Lessons are planned carefully. Learning tasks are imaginative, engaging and practical in most lessons, but this is not yet the case across the full range of subjects. Work is marked regularly and feedback on coursework is thorough. However, comments on work, particularly in Key Stage 3, are not always sufficiently explicit in helping students to understand their next steps in learning. The school demonstrates an outstanding culture of professional development for its staff, whose willingness to share good

practice exemplifies the high quality collaboration that takes place between them. The school curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of all students very well. It offers a broad and balanced experience. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from a curriculum that fully develops their basic skills and prepares them very well for future option choices. There are excellent opportunities for students to catch up on areas in which they are weaker, and for gifted and talented students to take on additional challenges. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 now offers a wider range of courses to students, including more science options and a good variety of vocational courses. This enables students to choose options more appropriate to their individual needs.

The school's specialist sports status has been well developed and its impact on the curriculum has been outstanding. The specialism has been used not only to improve accommodation and resources but also to develop more active learning styles. This is adding to students' enjoyment of learning.

Staff are fully committed to the care of students. Emphasis is placed on outstanding relationships. Guidance systems for early identification of learning difficulties help the smooth transition of students from their primary schools. The progress and needs of vulnerable students are systematically tracked so that tailored support can be provided. Learning support assistants work closely with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language to achieve high standards. An effective audit of more able students has helped teachers to target these students when planning lessons.

Personal target setting is in place through academic review meetings and an outstanding mentoring system is used to support students. Students highlighted the effectiveness of this system, although some subject-specific targets are not yet sufficiently refined.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides a coherent vision for learning which is understood and shared by staff. The leadership team is careful in taking calculated risks, and the implementation of new developments is extremely well planned. Together with middle managers, the team takes forward all major areas of development and has raised standards and achievement very successfully beyond targets set. Inclusion is a strength of the school. There is a commitment to giving all students equal access to courses, based on their individual needs. This is supported by many parental comments, such as: 'The focus has always been highest on hard work and application as opposed to the actual ability of the children... it is a refreshing and supportive approach.'

Governors provide highly effective support and challenge. They have very good systems in place to hold the school to account and to engage with the school's vision and aspirations for the future. The school works very closely with the local community, and promotes community cohesion particularly well through its partnerships with local industries in the region, although the international dimension is not yet so well developed. The Fusion project (run in partnership with the police) together with an enriched activity programme has made a positive contribution towards a 10% reduction in local crime in the evenings. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers use a broad range of teaching approaches to consistently challenge, motivate and engage all students.
- Make better use of marking and feedback to show students more clearly what they need to do to further improve their work.

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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
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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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	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 learners' needs?	1
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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Lode Heath School, Solihull, B91 2HW

Thank you for your warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. You demonstrated excellent behaviour and you have clearly formed very happy working relationships with one another and your teachers. We were impressed by the way in which you were able to explain why you enjoy school so much. You make excellent progress in school and this is reflected by the very high standards shown in your examination results. We judged your school to be outstanding.

The combination of outstanding teaching and your excellent attitudes in lessons results in you achieving very well. We have asked the school to make sure that teaching continues to improve by using a wider range of approaches in the classroom to challenge, motivate and engage all of you. Your books are marked regularly, but we have also asked teachers to make comments more explicit so you all know how to further improve your work. I am sure you will continue to play your part by working closely with your teachers to improve your work and achieve as well as you can.

We found that you receive a very high level of care and support which helps you feel confident that staff will help you in any situation. The curriculum on offer to you is excellent. The different options you can choose from ensure that you can find something that will interest you and best fit the way you learn. The broad range of extra-curricular activities is highly regarded and this is shown by the number of people who take part on a daily basis.

The school's leadership and management are outstanding. All staff are very committed to ensuring that you get the very best from the school.

We wish you continued success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Godley

Lead inspector