

Longridge High School A Maths and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119749
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327123
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Georgiana Sale

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	729
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Keith Akers
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Green
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Preston Road Longridge Preston Lancashire PR3 3AR
Telephone number	01772 782316
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector seconded to Ofsted and three other additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Longridge High School is a comprehensive 11 to 16 school which has had specialist mathematics and computing college status since 2004. The school attracts pupils from a wide geographical area and a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The numbers on roll have remained steady and the school is over subscribed. The number of students entitled to a free school meal is half the national average. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Longridge School is a good school. The vast majority of parents who returned the questionnaire praised the school and the way in which their children were making progress in a happy and secure environment. Good teaching and the strong support and guidance that staff provide result in the students achieving well.

Students enter the school with average levels of attainment and then make good gains in their learning to reach above average standards by the end of Key Stage 4. The school's tracking system, and already secured GCSE results, shows that students in Key Stage 4 are making even greater progress this year and are on course to meet challenging targets. In 2008, achievement in English was particularly impressive with the proportion of students gaining a good GCSE pass well above that in most schools nationally. Standards in GCSE mathematics have not kept pace with improvements in English and are broadly average; although students' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

The school provides a very safe and caring environment. Staff at all levels are dedicated and ambitious for the students to do well. This is evident in the extra time they give voluntarily at lunchtime and after school to make sure that students' needs, concerning their work or their personal concerns, are listened to and acted upon. Students said that they have great confidence in their teachers; this gives them a strong sense of security in school which makes a large contribution to their success.

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some which is outstanding. Teachers plan well to interest and challenge the students. The pace of learning is brisk. Excellent relationships and mutual respect create a very good atmosphere so that students relish their classes. Information and communication technology is used well to add to the variety of learning experiences. Students are often given the opportunity to take charge of their own learning and work co-operatively in groups. This, coupled with strong personal development, prepares them well for future study and their working life. However, sometimes teachers do not make it precisely clear in their marking what students need to do to improve their work. The curriculum is good. The good range of academic and vocational subjects and types of qualification offered makes a strong contribution to students' high level of enjoyment in their lessons and in their success in public examinations.

A strong sense of community underpins the students' good personal, spiritual, moral and social development. Their attendance and behaviour are good and they show high levels of self respect and respect for others and their school environment. The students are very keen to stay fit and healthy and most take part in the many after school clubs. Many students take an active part in the decision making processes of the school. Older students are peer mentors giving support to fellow students. Increasingly, students are becoming involved with their local community but have only a superficial understanding of the diversity of faiths and cultures found in Britain today.

The school is well managed and led at all levels. Governance is good. The new headteacher has an accurate picture of the school and what needs to be done. She has set a clear direction giving a common sense of purpose among the staff to move the school forward. Since the last inspection, issues concerning standards in English, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the consistency of middle management have been effectively tackled. Data is used very effectively to set challenging targets at whole school and departmental level.

Leaders and managers have been successful in improving students' attendance. They have also rigorously monitored teaching and improved the progress made by students in Year 11. The school therefore has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase standards and achievement in mathematics.
- Develop a greater consistency in marking so that it tells students precisely how they can improve their work.
- Provide more opportunities for students to learn about and celebrate the diversity of cultures and faiths in Britain today.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter Longridge School with average standards. They make good progress and by the time they reach Year 11 standards are above the national average, as shown by the proportion of students gaining five good GCSE passes. The proportion gaining good GCSE passes including English and mathematics is also above the national average, as is the proportion of students getting a good pass in a modern foreign language. Results in science and English show a rising trend, and in 2008 were both well above schools nationally. However, the results in mathematics have fallen to broadly average. The vast majority of students left the school with five GCSE passes in 2008 and all left with at least one GCSE pass.

Science, business studies, French, and German perform particularly well and in 2008 students in English, health and social care and statistics also achieved well above national standards. All students who took GCSE physical education achieved a good grade and the large majority of them gained the highest grade. Mathematics has performed less well compared with other subjects in the school for two consecutive years.

Relative to their capabilities, students with identified learning needs make good overall progress. This is because their progress is closely monitored and a combination of pastoral and academic support is used to help them do their best. Furthermore, good individual or group support is given by the well trained learning support assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is good. Students' good behaviour, good attendance and the excellent relationships between students and adults make a strong contribution to creating an environment where students can learn and gain in self-esteem and confidence. When students do have difficulties, the inclusion unit helps support them with emotional and behavioural problems and offers good support to vulnerable students generally.

Students say bullying is very rare and is dealt with quickly and effectively when reported. Many students make an effective and positive contribution to their own community. Older students are keen to support younger students; for example, Year 10 students help to advise Year 9 students with their option choices, and work in primary schools to improve mathematics and ICT skills.

The vast majority of students understand and adopt healthy lifestyles through sensible eating and nearly all take plenty of exercise. Some students have taken part in a guided programme which has enabled them to lose weight and increase their general well-being. They know how to stay safe and minimise risk in their school and personal life, and they speak confidently and very knowledgeably about internet safety. This is promoted effectively through the 'Think U Know' programme on child exploitation.

The school prepares students well for life after school. Students have good social skills; they are friendly, approachable, confident and mature. All students leave with an ICT qualification and above average standards in English. Increasing numbers are taking the opportunity to study vocational courses and all students take part in a work experience programme and enterprise education days. Students benefit from clear guidance on option courses and career pathways.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding practice. Most lessons are stimulating and 'buzzing' with a broad range of learning activities. Students respond well to the opportunities for independent work, the brisk pace and high levels of challenge. They understand what they are doing and why, and are becoming skilled at assessing the level of their own and others' work.

In the vast majority of lessons students enjoyed their work and the very good relationships and behaviour allowed lessons to move at a good pace. Students made good progress because of the high expectations set by their teachers. The varied range of activities helped to maintain students' interest although in some lessons the activity was not matched closely enough to individual students' needs.

Information and communication technology is used with confidence by both students and teachers to enhance learning. In the best lessons, thorough and informative marking provided good feedback on strengths and identified clear developmental points. However, the standard of marking and assessment of work was variable and sometimes lacked detail to guide students on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. A good range of vocational, GCSE and alternative curriculum courses create good opportunities to ensure the needs of all students are met. Good partnerships with local schools and colleges have enabled a broader range of courses, including the new diplomas, to be offered at Key Stage 4. A wide range of extra curricular activities and the good pastoral and citizenship courses enhance both the academic and personal development of students.

Specialist college status continues to have a positive impact on the wider curriculum. Good provision for information and communication technology has enabled all students to gain a qualification in the subject. The mathematics and information and communication departments are now entering students in Year 9 for some GCSE modules which enables them to work to their strengths and provides them with the flexibility to gain better grades. Provision for literacy

is good and the development of numeracy strategies, including the quiz compiled by Year 10 students for those in Year 7, are enhancing the curriculum very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall; there is a high level of pastoral care and good academic guidance. The staff know their students very well as individuals and are dedicated to raising their achievement. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet national requirements.

Challenging targets are set for students and the school has strong systems in place to track the progress of all students. The school makes very good use of data to monitor the progress of individuals and to support any whose achievement shows signs of slipping.

Students and parents are very appreciative of the school's work to support all students. Many spoke positively about the work done by peer mentors to make sure students settle into school quickly. Guidance and support to move to the next stage of their education beyond Year 11 is also good and in 2008 all who left went on to further education, training or employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, supported by a strong senior leadership team, gives clear and strong direction to the work of the school. All work well together and take effective strategic decisions to increase the opportunities available to the students. A well-planned cycle of self evaluation ensures that senior and middle leaders know how well the school is doing and the key priorities for further development. Senior staff have taken effective action to remedy areas of weakness. For example, English results are now well above national averages.

Middle leaders, supported by senior colleagues, demonstrate a sound ability to monitor, review, and plan action. Senior leaders have provided well targeted support to develop middle leaders and they hold them to account for their performance. As a result, there is a concerted drive to improve.

Governors are well informed and take a keen interest in the school. The school's finances and resources are well managed and governors have made the most of an opportunity to improve the accommodation of the school through incorporating a sports centre which had been in use by the local council. The governing body is increasingly involved in the evaluation of the school's performance and in strategic planning to bring about further improvements, challenging school leaders where appropriate. The school gives good value for money.

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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?	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Longridge High School, a Maths and Computing College, Lancashire, PR3 3AR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers and visiting some of your lessons.

We have judged Longridge to be a good school. It is a special place because of the care and support you get from your teachers who want to make sure that you get good results, and enjoy school as much as you can.

We were impressed with your behaviour in lessons and around the school. We thought that the range of courses that you choose from in Year 10 is good and helps the large majority of students to make good progress and achieve success in examinations.

We were pleased to see that you enjoy the many after school clubs and other activities that the school offers. Most of you work hard in lessons and it is also good to see that you involve yourselves in a wide range of activities that help the school.

You have a good headteacher and other teachers help lead the school well. To help the school be even better, we have asked the headteacher, the governors and staff to make improvements in the following areas.

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Improve the consistency of marking so that you know exactly what to do to improve.
- Provide more opportunities for you to learn about, and celebrate, the diversity of customs and faiths in Britain today.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection of your school. We enjoyed spending the two days with you and wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Georgiana Sale

Lead inspector