

Loxley Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124509
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328150
Inspection date	9 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Jackie Callaghan

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Glandfield
Headteacher	Richard Redgate
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2006
School address	Stafford Road Uttoxeter ST14 8RS
Telephone number	01889 256390
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The school inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. A social care inspector undertook an inspection of the residential provision. The additional inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the provision in meeting the needs of different groups of students
- students' achievement and personal development and how these aspects are supported
- the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in matching work to students' needs and in providing guidance to students to support their learning
- the effectiveness of senior leaders in monitoring the school's work and bringing about improvement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with students, staff and the chair of the governors, as well as school documentation and assessment information. 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

Loxley Hall is primarily a day school for boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Increasingly it takes boys with other learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including Asperger's Syndrome and attention deficit hyperactive disorders. Facilities exist for students to stay residentially. Currently 18 students access this facility for one or two nights each week. The headteacher took up his post at the start of the current term, having held a senior post at the school immediately prior to his appointment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Loxley Hall is a satisfactory school. Its key strength lies in the good systems in place to care, support and guide students' personal development. As a result of this, students' personal development is good. The school recognises that the students it takes are often emotionally very fragile when they first arrive. To address this, considerable thought has been put into providing effective ongoing support to help improve key aspects, such as their behaviour. Very careful tracking of students' personal development takes place on a daily basis. This is done through establishing weekly targets for each individual student. These are considered in all lessons and staff record whether they have been met. These data are collated at the end of each week and used to monitor students' performance. Where it is seen consistently to be below an individually negotiated base line, extra support is provided. These interventions are quickly put in place. A scrutiny of students' records shows that there are many examples of effective action being taken that result in much improved student's behaviour in and out of class. Such are the improvements they make that a few students are able to re-integrate into mainstream schools. It is also very beneficial in assisting students in Years 10 and 11 to be able to meet the demands of attending college courses or undertaking vocational training with work providers.

Students report that they enjoy most aspects of the school, particularly participating in the more practical activities. This is confirmed by the attendance of most students, although the poor attendance of a few reduces attendance to satisfactory overall. The views of students are carefully considered by the school. Students feel confident to put forward their ideas for improving the school environment. For example, mountain bikes have been purchased following the suggestions put forward by the school council. Students say they feel safe in school and that if bullying occurs, this is dealt with promptly by staff. Behaviour is good and students relate well to each other. Rigorous risk assessments are in place that enable students to take part in a wide range of activities both on and off site safely. Health and safety is given a high prominence and all child protection procedures are fully in place. Students make satisfactory progress in gaining relevant skills to equip them for further education, training and the world of work.

Given their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students' standards are understandably below average. Their achievements, though, are satisfactory. Records show that many make expected progress each year in most subjects, with progress consistently being good in mathematics. Passes in external examinations are increasing each year and the range of subjects has been extended. Good support systems ensure all groups of students, including those in the care of the local authority, perform equally well. The support for students' progress in lessons is not quite as effective as that for their personal development. This is partly because of some inconsistency in tracking how well they are achieving and using the information gained to plan future work.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Strengths undoubtedly include the positive relationships staff have with students, and opportunities to use information and communication technology, which are being increased by the introduction of more interactive whiteboards. Good personal support plans are in place for students experiencing difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Teaching support assistants make valuable contributions in managing students' behaviour but they are not always fully involved in supporting their learning. There are inconsistencies in the use of time and, on occasions, students are not productively occupied

following the completion of a set task. Although learning objectives are used well in some of the teaching to guide learning, there are times when there is an overemphasis on the lesson task without making its purpose clear. The school acknowledges these weaknesses in a draft teaching and learning policy that sets out clear expectations for lessons.

The curriculum is satisfactory. A varied range of learning experiences exist in Years 7, 8 and 9 which are very well supported by lessons designed to support students' emotional development. There are also very good opportunities to take part in sport. Work in design and technology is very good because of the way it builds students' skills through the many projects they complete. There are, though, insufficient opportunities for students to study music and learn a modern foreign language. Food technology is still a weakness, as highlighted in the last inspection. There are, though, plans to improve this and building work has begun on developing a suitable kitchen area. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is very innovative. It seeks to ensure students engage in learning through following personalised programmes. These include some high-level courses at college that lead to external accreditation. Many of these equate to GCSE passes and lead on to students being able to access post-16 courses. In addition, there are good opportunities to develop vocational skills through vocational GCSEs and work experience placements.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher, who knows the school well, has added considerable rigour to its development. There is an increased awareness amongst staff of students who are progressing at different rates, with individuals identified and effective intervention strategies put in place that have enhanced their progress. He has given a further impetus to the high priority the school gives to community cohesion. Throughout the school there is a strong respect for diversity and a whole-school determination to ensure equality of opportunity. Partnerships within the local community are strong and the school effectively promotes students' awareness of the wider world. Students' personal development is promoted consistently well at all levels of leadership and management, for example by flexible personal programmes for students in Years 10 and 11. However, leaders have not been as effective in monitoring students' progress and what happens in lessons to ensure consistency in teaching and learning. Self-evaluation has now accurately identified areas to be developed. The school action plan accurately addresses current weaknesses, with clear strategies to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the tracking of students' progress, and to enhance the monitoring role of all leaders and managers. Governors are very proactive in supporting the school. They know the school well and have played important roles in its development, including the appointment of staff.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of boarding at Loxley Hall is good and the school meets all key National Minimum Standards. The three recommendations from the school's last inspection are successfully met and further provide students with valuable help and support to enable them to positively thrive in society. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff show strong regard for the security, education and well-being of students at all times.

The food provided for students is of an adequate quality, but the school is aware that the range and choice is limited and is taking appropriate action to remedy this. At present, there are not many opportunities for students to try different types of food. As a result, the school is not overtly helping to broaden students' knowledge and awareness of other cultures. There are excellent arrangements in place for the physical and emotional health and well-being of students

who board. Their health needs are being consistently identified, which results in good staff support when accessing appropriate health services.

The school is proactive in creating a culture within the boarding provision that does not tolerate bullying and provides support to vulnerable individuals. Students feel safe and know how to raise concerns. One student commented, 'I know what to do if I'm unhappy.' Students' behaviour is well managed and relationships between staff and students are respectful, courteous and harmonious. Students commented that staff care for them. They are helped to retain their privacy and the principle of mutual respect is well communicated by staff. Students can keep in touch with their family and have regular access to telephones. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with family and friends.

Excellent systems are in place to ensure that students reside and are educated within a safe environment. Suitable fire safety checks are completed, and detailed risk assessments are continually updated to reflect the ever-changing needs of students who stay at the school. There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, and robust monitoring of visitors to the school ensures students' welfare is continually safeguarded. Students receive excellent individual support. The school values, promotes and encourages all of its students to make the best of their educational opportunities. Students explore their potential and develop their personal interests because staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner. Consequently the care, learning opportunities and activities are excellent. Students benefit from excellent continuity of care. The school's systems effectively gain students' views about matters affecting their daily lives and the general running of the school.

Boarding accommodation at the school allows students an appropriate level of privacy. It is suitably decorated and well maintained. However, the kitchen is not suitable for students to prepare and cook their own meals.

Staff are well trained and supported. They benefit from regular formal supervision, appraisals and staff meetings. Students benefit greatly from this positive approach as they are cared for by highly motivated, suitable and knowledgeable staff. Communication between staff across the school is good and effectively contributes to the welfare of students.

Managers show good leadership qualities, with a collective approach to monitoring the boarding provision. The staff team are allocated specific roles in relation to overseeing health and safety, complaints, child protection and incidents. As a result, students enjoy the stability of a well-maintained and appropriately supported care environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement plans to improve the systems to monitor and track students' progress in all subjects.
- Ensure that teaching time is always used productively and that learning objectives are clear to students.
- Extend the curriculum to give students increased opportunities to study music, a modern foreign language and food technology.
- Implement plans to involve all leaders more fully in monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection. National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care To improve the quality and standards of care further, the registered person should take account of the following recommendations.

- Develop more opportunities for students to be exposed to and celebrate different cultural foods, for example through themed cultural nights (NMS 15.1).
- Develop the residential provision to provide more opportunities for students to learn how to prepare their own meals (NMS 15.1, NMS 24.2).

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

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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?	3
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 effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

10 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Loxley Hall School, Uttoxeter, ST14 8RS

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome when we came to visit recently. We both very much enjoyed our time in school.

We have judged the school to have a number of strengths. For example, we consider the residential arrangements and facilities to be good. My report highlights a number of other strengths of the school. These include the care, support and guidance of staff to help you improve your personal development. This means a few of you can confidently return to a mainstream school and the older students can be successful at college. We also feel something called community cohesion is good. This means the school is helping you to understand the importance of being part of a community both in and out of school.

The new headteacher has made an impressive start and the development plans for the school reflect the fact that he knows what areas need improvement. Some of these centre around teaching. I know some of you on the school council felt this as well.

The key issues we have asked the school to address are:

- improve the ways staff know how well you are doing
- make sure that time in lessons is always well used and that you always know what you need to learn
- ensure you can study music, a modern foreign language and food technology
- ensure all leaders check what happens in lessons and monitor your progress as effectively as possible.

We know you are keen to do well so you all can do your bit to help by responding to the changes the new headteacher is keen to make.

Yours faithfully

Charles Hackett Lead inspector