

Landau Forte College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135120
Local Authority	City of Derby
Inspection number	331461
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1090
Sixth form	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Ashworth
Headteacher	Mr S Whiteley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Academy address	Fox Street Derby DE1 2LF
Telephone number	01332 204040
Fax number	01332 371867

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Landau Forte College originally opened in September 1992 as a city technology college and was re-designated as an academy in 2006. It is popular and highly over-subscribed, attracting students from across Derby with a diverse range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. There is a higher proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is not English, than is the case nationally. Attainment on entry in most year groups is above the national average. However, the 'fair banding' admissions introduced in September 2007 means that it is in line with national in Year 7. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has subject specialisms in technology and business enterprise.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the academy

Grade: 1

Landau Forte College is a high performing academy. A culture of equality and opportunity permeates it and ensures that students make outstanding progress in both their academic and personal development. The curriculum is broad and innovative. The flexible curriculum pathways, including a wide range of vocational options, enable students from many different backgrounds to develop their strengths, aptitudes and interests. Extension and enrichment activities are excellent. Expectations of student involvement and participation are high. Students contribute outstandingly well to the community, in a variety of ways. Success in all aspects of life at the academy is widely celebrated and, as a result, students grow in confidence and self-esteem. Staff work in productive partnership with students, parents, the local community and industry. The strong focus on partnership working and a proven track record of success drives the academy's outstanding capacity to improve further.

Excellent care, guidance and support contribute to students' outstanding personal development and well-being. Students are healthy and they report that they feel safe and enjoy their time at the academy. Their attendance is well above that found nationally. Good teaching, combined with the outstanding curriculum, encourages high levels of achievement and standards. Lessons are generally planned well and capture students' interest. Nevertheless, a few do not use sufficiently skilled questioning techniques to extend and challenge all students or to check students' understanding. Learning is enriched and supported by new technologies. Resources are used very well to enhance learning, for both learners within the academy and those in the wider community. There is a good emphasis on the world of work, through, for example, the academy's excellent business links and the careers programme. Standards in English and mathematics, as well as in information and communication technology (ICT) are high. Students, as a result, are outstandingly well prepared for their future economic well-being. The proportion who leave with no employment to go to, or who are not continuing in some form of education or training, is very low.

The principal and senior managers provide strong leadership in the drive for continuous improvement. Governors give a very good balance of challenge and support. They hold the academy to account. Thorough monitoring and evaluation procedures involve staff at all levels.

The academy has strong and established partnerships, which serve to extend its role in the wider community. For example, in supporting adult learning and work with local primary schools on 'master classes' for literacy, numeracy and ICT. Staff and students are proud to be part of this successful academy. The overwhelming commitment to achieving the best outcomes for all students is also recognised by parents who speak highly of the social and academic progress their children make.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The highly effective management of the sixth form ensures many students progress to higher education. Often, they are the first in their families to go to university. The outstanding curriculum allows students to select from a broad range of A-level subjects including vocational options. Opportunities are enhanced by a rich variety of extra-curricular activities. Students enjoy a two week work experience placement and this, along with the academy's high expectations of their self-discipline, prepares them very well for the world of work. Excellent

working relationships between staff and students ensure that lessons are enjoyable and good teaching enables students to progress well. Students make good progress in their work, and achieve good standards because teaching is good. They also develop a very mature approach, which is exemplified in the way in which they take advantage of opportunities for private study outside of timetabled lessons. Many of them work productively without supervision. Sixth form students also offer very good support for younger groups as peer mentors. They are particularly successful in providing targeted support for looked after children. As leaders of the academy's council they are influential, for example in helping improve the punctuality to lessons. The sixth form attracts a large number of students who are new to the academy. Their induction is very effective. The parent of one of these students commented 'this is the first time for a long time that my daughter has been happy, enthusiastic, eager to work and take part in the wider opportunities presented'. Many students expressed similar views.

What the academy should do to improve further

- Develop teaching further so that students' understanding is checked regularly, ensuring that all students are challenged, and so that, in the sixth form, achievement and standards are outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students generally enter the academy with above average standards. They then make outstanding progress so that by the end of Year 11 they reach exceptionally high standards. The results for the GCSE examinations in 2008 show that a very high proportion of students gained five or more high grade GCSE passes, with the vast majority also including English, mathematics and science. The academy's focus on improvement has led to an increase in the proportion of A* and A grades to above the national figure and the difference between boys' and girls' achievement has narrowed so that now both are achieving equally well.

The academy is particularly successful at raising the aspirations of those students who join with lower standards, including those who have learning difficulties. These students go on to make extremely good progress. GCSE results in mathematics and English are well above average. Results in science, business studies, performing arts and religious education are very high and perform consistently well above other subjects. The academy's data shows that most of the challenging targets for students to achieve by the end of Year 9 in 2008 were achieved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students are friendly, open and confident. Their attendance is outstanding and absences are followed up rigorously. Their personal and social skills are excellent and they have a strong spiritual and cultural awareness and understanding of moral issues. The harmony between different ethnic groups is evident. Students comment that they get on well with each other. Racist comments are a rarity, as is bullying. Behaviour around the academy and in lessons is usually very good, but occasionally students are restless when not fully engaged in their work.

Students make excellent contributions to life in the academy and to the local community. They raise often considerable funds for charities, support other students as mentors, act as junior sports leaders and give community service as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. They are very aware of the dangers of substance abuse and smoking. They are able to raise

issues of concern for discussion, such as internet safety, which the academy responds to well. Students say that the academy helps them stay safe and offers very good support to overcome any problems they may have.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with much that is outstanding. Students display very positive attitudes and high aspirations. In most lessons, students are keen to learn, highly motivated and work at a fast pace. Teachers have very high expectations. Their strong subject knowledge enables many to plan interesting well-structured lessons with tasks that both challenge students' thinking and bring learning to life. For example, students in an English lesson were intrigued by Shakespeare's use of the word 'fiddlesticks' for a sword when they realised it could equally apply to a violin bow. Lessons build effectively on students' prior knowledge. Students know how to improve their work and how to take the next steps in their learning. However, questioning is sometimes not sufficiently skilful. Questions are sometimes not used sufficiently to test understanding or to identify misconceptions. They therefore do not guide the development of the lesson. There is a small number of lessons in which students are not encouraged to discuss the work with each other, they remain inactive and uninvolved for too long. This leads to slower progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very well designed to accommodate the different interests and aptitudes of individual students. There is, for example, a broad range of vocational subjects, and work related learning courses provide a good range of options. All students begin their GCSE science courses in Year 9, which enables many to accelerate so they may focus upon other core subjects or extend their science studies.

The curriculum is enhanced further through an impressively wide range of extra-curricular activities, with particular strengths in sport and in the performing and visual arts. These activities promote students' confidence and self-esteem and enable them to participate with others and develop wider interests. Large numbers take advantage of them.

The academy's specialism in Technology and Business Enterprise pervades the whole curriculum. The 'state of the art' technology available to all students places them in a strong position for the world of work and for higher education. The curriculum is very well-designed to prepare students for local work opportunities: a good number have gone on to university to study for a degree in engineering, for example.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The mixed-age tutor groups support the development of a culture of achievement. The celebration of success is given high regard: older students' success inspires their younger peers. Tutors set clear expectations of students' attendance, standards of dress, and the need for them to be fully prepared and ready to engage in their learning. Partnerships with learning tutors, the college nurse, parents and guardians and, where necessary, senior managers, enhance

the tutorial experience and support the successful resolution of any problems. The support for those students at risk of exclusion and for those admitted who have been excluded from other schools is excellent. Those students who have learning difficulties receive equally effective support. Induction procedures are very good. Academic guidance and the use of target setting for improving student performance are highly effective.

The academy is thorough and rigorous in carrying out risk assessment and health and safety procedures. Not only do all staff receive child protection training but students acting as peer mentors and learning advisers also receive thorough training in this aspect of their responsibilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal offers a very strong lead, clear direction and a well-focused commitment to achieving the best for all students. The highly effective senior team provides very good support. Self-evaluation is thorough and focused systematically towards improvement and achieving the academy's goals for its students. Any shortfalls are investigated thoroughly and effective improvements are put into place. Staff at all levels are fully involved in the monitoring and review of their areas of responsibility and in formulating and implementing appropriate actions to bring about further improvement. Governors are highly active in monitoring the progress towards targets set. Their clear lines of communication and accountability make an excellent contribution to the achievement of the very high standards of care and education. This provides a firm foundation to support the academy's outstanding capacity to improve.

The academy makes a very good contribution to the local and wider community. However, it does not systematically monitor the impact of its actions to identify steps for further improvement in this element of its work. A very strong culture of equality and opportunity permeates all aspects of provision.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
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	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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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	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	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**

3 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Landau Forte Academy, Derby, DE1 2LF

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your academy recently. We spoke to a good number of you, in lessons, in meetings, or around the academy. We were very impressed by your friendliness, openness and confidence. We were also very impressed by the excellent education you receive. We found that you make outstanding progress in your learning. This is because the teaching you receive is good, with much that is outstanding. The curriculum is well-designed, and it caters well for the variety of interests and ambitions you have. Backing that up, there is a very good system to check that you are doing as well as you should be, and highly effective support to help any of you who are not. We were impressed by how regularly you attend and by how good your behaviour is, both in social areas as well as in lessons. You also enjoy being at the academy, and many of you appreciate the wide range of enrichment and extension activities there are for you.

You help your community well. The amount you raised last year for Children in Need was very impressive. Many of you are engaged in helping each other too, for example by being mentors, or by suggesting items for discussion at gatherings, such as internet safety.

We are suggesting one area where we feel an improvement can be made. It is to make teaching better still, so that it becomes outstanding. This can be done by your teachers checking your understanding in class more often and making sure also that you are all challenged. You can help the academy too, by carrying on attending well and taking full advantage of the many opportunities it gives you

Best wishes for your future,

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector