

Lea Valley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102050
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	335833
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1289
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Grayston
Headteacher	Janet Cullen
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 35 lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of learners. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies and development planning; the analysis of examination results and data related to the tracking of students' progress; senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning; safeguarding documents; governors' minutes; students' work and 90 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the accuracy and effectiveness of the school's tracking systems and how well data are used to close the gaps in performance, especially between subjects and groups of students
- how well students attain and progress in Key Stage 3, particularly students who speak English as an additional language
- how well students know how to improve their work
- the impact of the school's specialism across the school and the wider community
- the effectiveness of leadership in evaluating the school's strengths and areas for improvement and its capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Lea Valley High School is a diverse school community housed in new buildings constructed to address the demand for places in Enfield. As a result, there has been an increase in inward mobility, particularly from students with significant barriers to their learning. Half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is nearly four times the national average. The proportion of looked after children on roll is significant. For over 50% of the students, English is an additional language and many are not literate in their home language upon entry to the school. Over 60% of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around 25% of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school was designated as a specialist sports college in 2002 and re-designated in 2006. It achieved Partnership Mark and the Healthy School award in 2008. It also has Sports Mark Award and the Intermediate International School Award. It has a growing sixth form.

An Ofsted subject survey of mathematics in March 2009 judged overall effectiveness in this subject to be good.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Lea Valley High School provides a good quality of education and many aspects of its work are outstanding. 'God bless this awesome school', 'school is AMAZING' and 'I love school,' are typical of the comments made by students. The harmonious school community celebrates its diversity extremely well and relationships are founded on mutual respect. The whole ethos of the school revolves around the outstanding care of its students. Many of them face uniquely challenging circumstances, but as a result of the school's care and support, are able to thrive. Adults know the students in their care well and are a welcoming and friendly presence around the school. As a result, students feel safe. Students who were keen to express how much they value the relationships with adults that they are able to build up over their school careers. As a result of these strong relationships, students display positive attitudes towards their learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. They appreciate the good teaching they receive and, in particular, their teachers' good subject knowledge and willingness to give of their time to help students who find learning difficult. Students are treated as individuals and the innovative curriculum is able to meet their individual needs so that they are able to make outstanding progress. This is particularly true of students with special educational needs and/or disability and those for whom English is an additional language, as a result of the excellent support they receive.

Standards of attainment over the last three years have been low and although they have been steadily rising, standards in English remain low. The new leadership in the English department is addressing this and evidence seen of attainment across subjects during the inspection, including English, indicate that in four out of five lessons, attainment was average or better. New leadership and a change of curriculum in science have resulted in standards beginning to improve.

Students value the opportunities to keep fit as a result of the specialist college status. They seize the many opportunities to undertake leadership roles through sport and through the active school councils, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students expressed their excitement about the number of trips locally and abroad that enhance their learning and understanding of global issues.

The school works hard to ensure that all students and their parents understand the importance of good attendance. Although the school strives to support vulnerable students and their families to improve their attendance, there remain a very small minority, particularly in Key Stage 4 who are persistently absent. Overall attendance rates are improving and are now average.

The strong leadership team are passionate about driving forward improvement and this

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ambition is shared across the school community. Methods of tracking students' progress are sophisticated, enabling the leadership to identify underachievement quickly and to take appropriate action. Effective leadership of teaching and learning has resulted in a high level of consistency in the teaching strategies employed, such as a clear common focus in lessons on how students will be assessed so that all students are aware of how to improve their work and aim for the highest standards. Teachers provide good role models for their students. In a few lessons students fail to engage sufficiently or to develop sufficient independence in their learning. In lessons where there are more than one year group, some teachers do not plan sufficiently for the differing experience and needs of the various age groups. Students speak of the 'privilege' of being able to retake GCSE subjects to improve their grades and move on to higher-level courses at a time that is appropriate for their individual needs.

The governing body provides outstanding support for the school and its leadership and has ensured that safeguarding procedures are exemplary. The school knows itself well and has robust procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance in all aspects of its work and ensuring equality of provision for all groups of students. This has resulted in substantial improvements in many key areas since the last inspection, notably in the outstanding provision for the curriculum and care, guidance and support. Despite this, attainment in some key subjects has been slower to rise and therefore the school's capacity to improve is judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - ensuring that all subjects focus on raising basic literacy skills
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring lesson planning meets the differing needs of individual students to engage them more effectively.
- Further raise attendance levels to above average by reducing persistent absence in Key Stage 4

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

On entry, standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science are significantly below the national average and with low levels of literacy. Almost two-thirds of students speak English as an additional language and a third of those in Key Stage 3 have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These groups make outstanding progress but not enough to reach average standards because so much time has to be spent during the key stage focusing on basic literacy, learning and social skills. Current standards at Key Stage 3 are improving, especially in science. Progress in mathematics and English is also evident, although standards in English are lower. All groups of students continue to make excellent progress during Key Stage 4, with students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language continuing to make exceptional progress. This has resulted in standards at Key Stage 4

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showing sustained improvement over the last three years from a low base. The progress seen in the majority of lessons is good and often better than this. When taught well, students are interested and keen to learn.

Almost all parents say that the school keeps their children safe and students feel secure about how to keep safe outside school as a result of 'life skills' lessons. There is a calm atmosphere around the school. Students have high expectations of how their peers should behave and are indignant if their learning is disrupted by poor behaviour. They say these few instances are dealt with quickly and effectively. They understand how to stay healthy and are appreciative of the breakfast club, for which there is a large take-up. Students enjoy opportunities to experience the world of work through partnerships with business. However, as key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are underdeveloped and attendance average, students' skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being remain satisfactory.

Students are welcoming and polite to visitors and get on well with each other. They enjoy working together in groups and the opportunities to act as leader. As a result of the well-established focus on restorative justice they know how to resolve conflict and are quick to apologise if they upset someone. The school works hard to provide a variety of opportunities that enable students to experience art, music and the theatre and, in particular, life in other areas of Britain through residential weekends. These are greatly appreciated and enjoyed. Students particularly enjoy organising events at local primary schools as a result of work in sport and mathematics.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, teachers and students work as a team towards a common goal that is well understood by the students. They enjoy a variety of active tasks and good use of resources, including ICT. There are opportunities to build on prior learning and to practise skills in a variety of different ways, enabling students to develop in confidence. In many Key Stage 4 lessons, mixed-age groups support each other and share their experience. In weaker lessons, some teachers fail to provide the opportunity to learn in small steps to build their skills gradually. Although the use of assessment is strong in the majority of lessons, the quality of marking is inconsistent so that students do not always have written guidance on how to improve their work or have the opportunity to respond to the teacher's comments.

The school has a bold and innovative approach to curriculum design which enables students to access a broad range of options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This approach enables students to progress at different rates and those who join the school during the school year can achieve. The curriculum is highly responsive to individual needs, for example, providing accelerated opportunities for some to begin AS levels in Year 11 and start BTEC programmes in Year 9. The sport specialism drives this curriculum innovation, for example, enabling Year 9 to start a GCSE course in physical education. It also leads to partnership with, for example, Arsenal football club and work at the Olympic stadium to promote literacy. Extra-curricular opportunities are varied, although those in performing arts are less well developed than in sport.

As a result of the Welcome Unit, students who arrive during the school year, including those at an early stage of speaking English, settle in a secure environment, which enables them to build their language skills before integrating fully into school life. Teachers and support staff work very well together with a range of external agencies to ensure the best possible individual care. Successful strategies are in place to support students' varying needs, for example raising girls' self-esteem and to eliminate poor behaviour. The community police officer is an integral part of the 'safer school' team. Strategies to improve attendance have been effective, including texting parents to inform them immediately of absence. Parents are involved fully in their children's education and vulnerable families receive a high level of support.

Excellent transition strategies and strong links with primary schools, including visits by students, result in new students settling quickly. They receive excellent guidance as they move to each stage of their education. As a result, the proportion of students who do not go on to education, employment or training when they finish their compulsory education is very small.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are a strong team and share a clear vision for the school's development that has students' well-being at its heart. The leadership of the specialist subject is particularly effective in developing partnerships across the school and community. The school is the base for partnerships that promote students' well-being in the area, with the principal taking a leading role ensuring the school is a centre of good practice. Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of the school's work and as a result, all groups of students thrive. The school is aware of the large numbers of parents who do not speak English fluently and translates information that goes home, including telephone messages. The school is continually striving to improve this level of partnership and employs a wide variety of strategies to ensure parents have a voice and are kept well informed. This results in parents' evenings that are very well supported and high levels of parental satisfaction with the running of the school. The leadership, including the governors, work hard to provide experiences for students that will increase their understanding of national and global communities and to continue to develop the close-knit, but socially diverse, school community. Externally funded trips to Turkey and the Philippines and residential trips in England have provided outstanding opportunities for students to develop their understanding of national diversity and engage with other cultures. Child protection arrangements are exemplary and a large proportion of staff have a high level of training to ensure that students with diverse and unique needs in the school community receive the care they need.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The school has an open-access policy to the sixth form which has enabled many students to continue their education at the school. Attainment on entry to the sixth form has therefore been lower than average. Standards in applied A levels are at the national average and overall pass grades at A level are rising year on year and are now virtually at national levels. The proportion of students achieving the higher grades is growing, but remains below the national average. Students make good progress and develop into mature young people who participate enthusiastically in their community and do much to benefit others, especially for charity. The teaching they receive develops the mature learning skills of students, some of whom have limited qualifications when starting sixth form study. They value the effective contribution from teachers who have other professional experience to inform their studies, for example in business studies. Courses are offered at all levels and include access to the Key Stage 4 curriculum and liaison with other partners to ensure that students study the subjects they need. Care, guidance and support are also outstanding as a result of excellent induction and guidance, and the steps taken by the school to raise aspirations and open students' eyes to career opportunities available through higher education. Drop-out rates are very low and attendance is good. Nearly all students who wish to enter university, employment or other training are successful.

The leadership and management demonstrate great ambition and this is being translated into higher attainment, growing popularity of the sixth form and the confidence that students have in the school's ability to develop their careers. Very effective self-evaluation informs decision making. The leadership has good engagement at all stages with students and parents and together with the outstanding care, this is a rapidly improving sixth form.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

A very small proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire. Most parents of these indicated that they were happy with the way the school provides for their children's well-being and their learning and progress. Very few comments were made. Two parents responded that there was not enough homework and two parents expressed opposing views about the way in which the school deals with bad behaviour. A very small minority say that communications with the school are sometimes difficult because of the telephone system. Other inspection evidence indicates that communication and partnership with parents are outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lea Valley High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1289 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	42	34	51	3	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	21	31	39	58	7	10	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	37	33	49	7	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	27	41	61	4	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	16	24	40	60	8	12	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	24	38	57	11	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	24	42	63	6	9	2	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	27	36	54	7	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	18	40	60	11	16	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	27	35	52	8	12	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	15	38	57	12	18	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	11	16	47	70	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	30	39	58	4	6	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Lea Valley High School, Enfield EN3 6TW

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school. We were particularly impressed by your mature comments and your evident pride in your school. We agree that it is a good school, and these are our main findings.

- Attainment by the end of Year 11 is low but improving. You enjoy your learning and are making outstanding progress.
- You greatly value the relationships you have with your teachers and each other and the harmonious school community where everyone is respected. Your behaviour in lessons is good and most of you attend well, although there are still some of you who are absent too often.
- Teaching is good. It is enhanced by the good resources that enable teachers to provide a variety of tasks to enable you to build on your skills. Teachers ensure that you know how you will be assessed so that you to understand how to improve your work, and they encourage you to aim for the highest standards by 'aiming for blue'.
- The curriculum is outstanding, enabling you to follow courses that match your interests and abilities, and it is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits. You particularly value opportunities to re-take examinations so that you can improve on your results and to go on to higher qualifications when you are individually ready.
- The excellent care you receive enables you to feel safe and well supported and you particularly value the fact that your teachers know you well and care about you as individuals.
- The school's leaders are working unstintingly to ensure you are well cared for and that things continue to improve.

In order to take your learning to new heights, we have asked the school to ensure that teaching is consistently good and that standards of literacy improve to enable you to raise your attainment in all subjects. You can help by always working hard to achieve your targets and attending regularly.

Yours sincerely

Mary Davis

Lead inspector

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