

# Richard Lander School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112055
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	337829
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Pyner

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1339
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barry Trip
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Mulcahy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Higher Besore RD Truro TR3 6LT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 47 lessons and observed 37 teachers. They held meetings with senior leaders, governors, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at progress tracking and performance data, the school development plan, governors' minutes, students' work and numerous policies, guidelines, plans and reviews. The questionnaire responses from 210 parents and 153 students were also analysed.

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

- ' the quality of teaching and learning to develop the achievement of all students
- ' how effectively the curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of all students
- ' how well teachers use assessment, progress tracking and target setting procedures to support the students' achievement
- ' the effectiveness of the work by governors, senior and middle leaders to bring about improvement.

## Information about the school

Richard Lander School is much larger than the average comprehensive. In September 2006, the school relocated to a new building on the outskirts of Truro and now serves an urban district together with communities in a large rural area to the north of the city. Since 1998, the school has been a specialist technology college and it is also the base for specialist educational provision for a small number of students with complex special needs. A centre for the school-based training of teachers has been located at Richard Lander for a number of years. The school has achieved a range of awards for its work covering sports, arts, health education, special needs, international partnerships and learning, and the development of work and life skills. The headteacher took up his post in September 2008. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both well below national figures. In total, there are fewer students with special educational needs and/or disabilities than found nationally, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.

**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

Richard Lander School provides a good standard of education. Since his appointment, the headteacher, fully supported by the other senior leaders and the governors, has worked to improve the achievement of students and there are clear signs of success. The school is in a good position to accelerate improvement across all aspects of its work due to:

- ' the shared drive displayed by all staff and governors to provide wide-ranging opportunities which match students' aptitudes, abilities and interests
- ' effective self-evaluation procedures which lead to a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- ' the development of a clear system for tracking students' progress, which provides detailed information that has been used effectively to raise students' achievement in some subjects by Year 11, particularly mathematics.

The care, guidance and support for students are outstanding, and so it is not surprising that they say they feel very safe in school and greatly appreciate the work of the staff. The school is rightly proud of its nurturing approach and this was a common feature of parents' responses to the questionnaire distributed as part of the inspection. The school's excellent links with a broad range of partners generate wide-ranging opportunities for both the students and the wider community. Links with other schools within Britain and in other countries mean that students have a very good understanding of the world beyond Cornwall.

All groups of students achieve well. Over the last three years, attainment has been average overall, but this masks an impressive improvement in the 2009 results and school data forecast further improvement for this year. The specialist subjects are a real strength of the school, with attainment in design and technology consistently significantly above average. Many students noted how much they enjoy this subject. However, this improvement has not been as marked in all subjects and particularly English. This is largely because there is still variability in the use of tracking data by subject leaders to develop planning, raise achievement and hold teachers to account for performance as well as ensuring consistent teaching and learning.

Students are proud to attend the school. They are polite, positive and friendly, and they behave well. They readily discuss their work and say they particularly enjoy practical subjects. All aspects of their work are celebrated. For example, at the time of the inspection, a school exhibition included outstanding examples of GCSE course work in art which have been used highly effectively to develop the spiritual and cultural aspects of students' learning.

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The quality of teaching is good overall and the school has an effective system of monitoring and support for staff. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and their relationships with students are good. Inspectors found some excellent examples of marking which provided students with a clear idea of how well they are doing and how to improve. However, the quality is variable and where it is less effective, the presentation of students' work particularly suffers and this was noted in English and science books during the inspection. There is very good support for vulnerable students and those from the area resource base are successfully integrated into the life of the school. An important focus for the school has been the development of the curriculum to better meet the needs, aspirations and interests of the students. Much work has been completed but this has not yet led to a consistent improvement in achievement across all subjects.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- ' Raise attainment and increase progress in English, by:
  - developing the analysis of outcomes to identify underachievement more effectively
  - sharply focusing intervention strategies where underachievement is identified
  - addressing any issues of consistency in teaching and learning.
- ' Secure and develop the improvement in the work of subject leaders by:
  - embedding the enhanced system for progress tracking across all subjects to ensure accountability
  - building on the current framework for monitoring to ensure a more consistent approach in the use of data to inform planning, and to increase challenge and progress in learning.
- ' Use the best practice found in the school to improve the quality of marking, so that it consistently helps students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

Overall, evidence from Year 11 examination results, lessons and students' books shows that students' attainment is average and rising. The most recent examination results show significant improvements overall and particularly in mathematics, with a continuation of good results in design and technology, modern foreign languages, drama and art. However, in GCSE English, while results have been average, there has not been the level of improvement seen in other subjects. The attainment of higher ability students has improved significantly. The school's progress data indicate that attainment is set to improve further in the examinations this year. All students make at least good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most students are keen to do well, respond thoughtfully to adults and other students in lessons and demonstrate good, and often excellent, attitudes to learning and behaviour.

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Lesson observations and discussions with students show that they enjoy their lessons, particularly design and technology, drama, PE and art.

Students say they feel very safe and this is supported by the views of parents and carers. Students' contributions to many aspects of the school and wider community contribute significantly to its inclusive nature and their understanding of the cultural heritage of the area. Students generally recognise the needs of others and the vertical tutor grouping system enables older students to support younger ones; students said they appreciate this aspect of the pastoral system.

Involvement in a wide range of community based music, drama and arts festivals and projects, a number of which are organised by the school, is used very effectively to develop students' understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimension of learning, including Cornish heritage. This is taken further through links with a number of schools in Europe and further afield, including the Richard Lander Primary School in Nigeria, and this international dimension has been recognised with a national award.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

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

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Strengths in teaching include teachers' subject knowledge, planning and effective engagement of students, often using technology well to develop interest and reinforce learning objectives. In the best lessons, highly effective relationships lead to a variety of approaches, including paired and group work where students can discuss and test their own ideas. Where teaching is less effective, too much time is taken in talking to the whole class, which means that students have less time to practise their understanding and skills and consequently the pace of learning slows. This can lead a few students to lose interest in the lesson and become distracted. Teachers generally use the assessment tracking system well to support students' learning. Procedures developed since September enable regular tracking of progress and this allows teachers to plan appropriately challenging work, although there remains some inconsistency in practice. Some variability in marking also means that learners are not always clearly informed about how they can improve their work.

Good curricular provision reflects a focus on the improvement of this aspect over the last two years. This has involved significant changes to enable students of all abilities to engage in courses which are relevant to their abilities and interests, as well as leading to accredited qualifications. These include BTEC courses in public services, sport, information and communication technology, art and design and science, together with a range of vocational pathways and Diploma courses. Some of these courses are offered in conjunction with partner colleges and schools. The development of these courses has been effective in meeting the needs of a wider range of students at the school but they have yet to have a sustained impact on attainment outcomes. Students appreciate the extensive programme of enrichment activities.

The school's specialism has an outstanding impact on its work, its partner primaries and further afield within the county of Cornwall. An example within the school is the role of the design and technology department in trialling assessment procedures. Attainment in design and technology, science and mathematics shows impressive improvement over time, and a lead role in the development of technology exhibitions and competitions, both within and beyond the county, develops real enjoyment and interest amongst the students.

The students receive outstanding care, guidance and support from the school. Students are provided with very effective guidance on curriculum course choices. The attention to the needs of vulnerable individuals is a considerable strength of the school, driven by the directors of learning. Teachers and parents describe examples of how the school has dramatically improved the life chances of individuals by working alongside families and outside agencies.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<p><b>The quality of teaching</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>

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

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<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>
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## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a dynamic presence and vision, and articulates his clear understanding of what needs to be implemented to improve academic standards while maintaining the high quality care and support of which school is rightly proud. Senior leaders provide effective support in this drive for improvement through their extensive knowledge about the development of the school over time. At middle management level, subject leaders are becoming more effective in their engagement with the processes designed to improve students' achievement. These include more robust collection and analysis of progress tracking and swifter intervention where underperformance is detected, as well as holding teachers to account for the progress of students in their classes. However, their effectiveness is variable and not yet embedded across all departments. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They provide effective support and, increasingly, challenge. They are committed to raising achievement in an inclusive community of learners.

The school has developed excellent partnerships with other schools and the wider community, including business organisations. The links established through the school's technology specialism and the strong partnerships developed through the creative arts make up an important element of this work. The training school status enables positive links across the region as well as providing wider opportunities for students.

The procedures to ensure the safeguarding of students are excellent. Regular and effective training leads to a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among staff at all levels.

The school is effective in meeting its duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination. Operational structures, monitoring and relationships with community groups are strong, but the evaluation procedures to measure the outcomes of provision are less effective. The school is aware of this. Senior leaders understand that it is very important to foster understanding of life beyond the boundary of Cornwall, and do so in a highly successful way. The resulting inclusive culture and ethos extend beyond the school, especially through its specialism and creative arts. Furthermore, the school uses its national and international links very well to enrich students' experiences and understanding of global issues.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

### Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school. Responses show they feel very strongly that their children enjoy school and are safe and cared for, and that teaching is good. Most parents and carers also feel that the leadership and management of the school are effective. A very small minority felt that the school was less effective in helping parents and carers to support their children's learning and taking account of parental suggestions and concerns. The inspection team found no evidence to substantiate these two relatively negative views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Richard Lander 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 210 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1339 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	40	113	54	10	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	97	46	106	50	3	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	92	44	105	50	9	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	89	42	107	51	12	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	37	120	57	10	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	28	117	56	30	14	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	31	124	59	16	8	1	0
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)	84	40	104	50	13	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	77	37	112	53	14	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	32	117	56	15	7	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	28	114	54	25	12	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	82	39	106	50	10	5	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	102	49	95	45	9	4	2	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



13 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Richard Lander School, Truro TR3 6LT

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to the student guides who helped us find our way around and to those of you who completed the questionnaire; we found this very useful. We enjoyed talking with all the students we met and found what you had to say very informative and relevant. The fancy dress costumes worn by the Year 11 students were really impressive and I am sure the Leavers  Ball was a success.

This letter is to tell you about our findings. Richard Lander School provides a good standard of education. We were impressed by your behaviour and the quality of your relationships with adults and other students. Your attainment at the end of Year 11 is broadly average and improving strongly; the progress you make in most of your subjects is good. The opportunities you have through the specialist subjects of design and technology, mathematics and science are a strength of the school. However, achievement in some subjects could be improved further. You are cared for and supported excellently. Teaching is good overall. Your teachers provide you with a good curriculum that increasingly meets your interests and needs. The partnerships the school has established to increase opportunities and support students are excellent. Your progress is now tracked well, helping you to know how well you are doing in your work. The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide effective leadership and management. They recognise that there are always areas for improvement, and these are the aspects the inspection team identified:

- increase achievement in English further
- support the work of subject leaders so that students can continue to improve the progress that they make
- improve the quality of marking so that it consistently helps students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There are some excellent examples of this in the school.

You too have an important part to play in supporting the staff to bring about improvements, by continuing to work hard and making the most of the excellent range of opportunities you have at school. I am sure that you will, and I wish you well for the

future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner Her Majesty's Inspector

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