

Looe Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112062
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337832
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Metcalf

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	617
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Moyra Evans
Headteacher	Heather Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 27 lessons taught by 25 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, governors and students. Inspectors looked at a wide range of data and documentation including the school improvement plan, assessment data, student tracking, school policies, governing body minutes and the school's evaluation of its work. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 148 parents and carers were also analysed.

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

- achievement of boys and attainment and progress in mathematics
- impact of the specialisms on the students' achievement, and success in achieving specialist targets
- impact of staff turnover including turnover of middle managers on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- quality and impact of self-evaluation on improving student outcomes and the school's capacity for further improvement.

Information about the school

Looe Community School is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving the town of Looe and its surrounding area including small coastal townships and isolated rural villages and hamlets. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is in line with national averages. Their needs range from moderate behavioural or learning difficulties to more profound needs. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The school was awarded specialist status in performing arts in 2004 and a second specialism in mathematics and computing in 2009. The school was recently successful in its bid to develop an Academy of Tourism in partnership with the South East Cornwall Learning Partnership and has been appointed as a Diploma Champion for South East Cornwall schools for the development of the Creative and Media Diploma.

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

3

Main findings

Looe Community School is a good school which has worked hard to overcome the difficulties of staff shortages and recruitment since the last inspection. Trends in falling attainment have now been reversed and attainment is currently in line with national averages. Weaker performance of boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been addressed through identification and intervention. At the time of the inspection there was no subject leader in science and this is having a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the department. Staffing issues in mathematics have been resolved and attainment in the subject is on an upward trend.

The proportion of students attaining five A* to C GCSE passes (including English and mathematics) and five GCSE passes improved in 2009 and a wide range of evidence confirms that this improvement is on track to continue in 2010. Given the students' below-average starting points, this represents good progress. Vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because of the outstanding care and support they receive. The school broadly met its ambitious specialist targets in 2009 and is on track to do so in 2010.

The quality of teaching is improving and the school is making better use of data to target students and check they are making the progress they should. The care and support provided to promote learning, personal development and well-being is outstanding and the broad and balanced curriculum is appropriate as it is responsive to the needs of students.

Behaviour is good and attendance is above average. Students say they enjoy school and feel safe. They are aware of healthy lifestyles and choices which are well supported through their involvement in physical education and sport. Students make an excellent contribution to the local and wider community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Teachers have high expectations and enjoy very good relationships with their students. They make good use of assessment to target students' progress and to plan work that meets students' needs. However, the use of marking and immediate feedback is variable and this results in some work that is untidy or incomplete. Recent training on the use of questioning is having a positive impact and teachers make good use of question and answer sessions to engage students, encourage reflection and elicit extended answers. However, there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching, which ranges from outstanding to inadequate. Parents' questionnaires reflect this range with comments

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such as 'encouraging, empowering and exciting the young people's appetites for learning' to 'poor communicators and frustrating the learning process'. One of the reasons for this variation is that the approaches to leadership and management of teaching and learning are not yet been consistently rigorous with some middle managers needing additional support to embrace change.

Community cohesion is promoted well and the school has begun to evaluate the impact of this work. The school has created a detailed plan for further development including links with a high-performing secondary school in Tower Hamlets. This link, through the performing arts specialism, recognises the need to provide students with further opportunities to engage with students from cultures and communities which are different from their own.

The large majority of parents are supportive of the school and as one says, 'It delivers well-educated and prepared individuals for life.' Although a small minority of parents expressed concerns regarding incidents of inappropriate behaviour at the school, these are rare and have minimal effect on learning. Other concerns raised confirm the need for better communication between school and home.

The headteacher provides determined and committed leadership with a strong vision for improvement. The leadership and management have been effective in improving overall attainment and progress. However, the capacity of the senior team to improve outcomes for students is currently only satisfactory, as leaders and managers (including middle managers) have not yet demonstrated sufficient impact on improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - improving the quality of teaching through lesson observation, individual support and the sharing of good practice
 - supporting subject leaders to develop their skills to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching in their subject area
 - improving the quality of improvement planning by focusing on priorities and identifying clear lines of accountability
 - filling the vacancy for the subject leadership of science.
- Improve the effectiveness with which the school communicates with all parents and carers by:
 - increasing the frequency and improving the quality of the school's communications with parents and carers
 - providing further information about how parents can support their children's learning.

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Student attainment is in line with national averages and there is good evidence from the school's tracking of students' progress that it is now improving. This is confirmed through lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work. The recent focus on improving attainment in mathematics and by boys has ensured that progress in lessons and over time is now good overall. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of higher-attaining students are similarly good.

Behaviour is good and students say that any incidents of bullying and harassment are effectively dealt with. Students engage themselves well in their lessons and relationships are harmonious and supportive. Students are well prepared for future education and employment including through development of their information and communication technology skills, work-related learning and a range of enterprise activities.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community with 96% of students saying that they enjoy school; discussions confirmed their pride and commitment. Their contribution to the community is evidenced through a very wide range of activities including working with local primary schools and raising money for local charities including 'Ellie's Haven', which will offer respite care to families with children suffering long-term illnesses.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Topical themes for the week are discussed and students have an opportunity to voice their views and empathise with others. Opportunities are provided to explore and develop moral concepts and values including through the 'Being British' project. The performing arts specialism offers many opportunities for cultural experiences such as African mask-making, Polynesian art and the celebration of Cornish culture. The school offers a choice of assemblies including an alternative assembly and a free assembly with enthusiastic community singing and a variety of songs skilfully linked, making use of the theme for the week which was mending broken relationships. Such examples reflect the students' good overall achievement.

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	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ 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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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
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good and most students confirm that they learn a lot in lessons. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with their students and strengths of the lessons observed include the sharing of learning objectives, the use of new technology as a teaching tool and questioning which encouraged extended answers. In an outstanding English lesson students' positive relationships and high level of motivation helped them to focus on the exemplar essay and demonstrate high levels of reflective and critical thinking.

In the less successful lessons the teaching suffers from a lack of pace and work fails to cater for the spread of ability in the class. Students have a good idea of their target grades but are unable to articulate exactly what they have to do to meet those targets. In a minority of lessons books remained unmarked and this results in poor presentation and incomplete work.

The good curriculum meets every student's needs, and makes good use of the school's specialism in performing arts. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities include regular 'discovery' days which cover a variety of cross-curricular themes. Good use is made of the performing arts specialism, with much high-quality work and an obvious impact in many other subjects through the use of role play and drama. Leadership in the local area is evident, for example through the Diploma course in creative arts which is shared with other schools. The mathematics and computing specialism has been 'live' for one year. There has been a significant increase in the use of computing across the school, but the impact of the mathematics specialism has yet to be fully realised.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school has developed well-targeted systems to support all students in the school through a strong pastoral team. Transition arrangements from primary to secondary school and from secondary to post-16 education and training are thorough and well considered with flexible option choices and strong links to a variety of outside agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team and middle managers have worked hard to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection, but their efforts have been slowed by difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in mathematics. Senior staff are now more focused on priorities and are taking effective steps to identify weaknesses in teaching and share good practice across the school. School leaders demonstrate ambition and drive, for example by gaining a second specialism and through their involvement in important developments such as the Academy for Tourism.

The governing body is influential in supporting the strategic direction of the school. Governors have an increasing role within the school and they are beginning to extend their influence to include working with individual departments. They have a good awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and they challenge and support the school in securing improvements. Governors discharge their statutory duties effectively. The school is beginning to identify better ways of communicating with parents, including the school website, emails and school bulletins. Parents' and carers' responses to the questionnaire identify concerns over helping them to support their children's learning and taking account of their views. Other parental surveys undertaken by internal and external organisations are more positive about the relationship between home and school.

Arrangements for safeguarding students fully meet all the current requirements. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good, as is shown by the improvement in boys' achievement, and every effort is made to tackle any potential discrimination. Financial management is good. The school is highly committed to working in partnership and takes a leading role in a range of significant activities associated with the school specialisms as well as successfully leading creative and vocational development in the area. These partnerships make an excellent contribution to students' good achievement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The OFSTED questionnaire was returned by about 25% of parents and carers. Of those that responded to the inspectors' questionnaire, a very large majority of parents and carers agreed that their child enjoyed school and was safe there. Inspectors agree with these positive views. A minority expressed less positive views on some matters, such as the fact that the school did not do enough to help them to support their children's learning or take account of parents' suggestions and concerns. Evidence shows that the school supports parents and carers through regular feedback, parent meetings and the school website. Parents and carers were also concerned about unacceptable behaviour and the inspectors did not find evidence to support their concerns. Behaviour in lessons was good and students move purposefully around the school.

Concerns of a minority of parents and carers over leadership and management were also echoed by staff. Inspectors are confident with the direction being undertaken by the headteacher and senior staff, but found evidence that the school was not as successful in communicating its intentions. In particular, the school had not done enough to explain the strategic roles of senior staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Looe Community 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 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 617 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	20	98	66	15	10	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	40	27	95	64	7	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	21	89	60	21	14	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	21	81	55	22	15	6	4
The teaching is good at this school	30	20	81	55	19	13	6	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	16	63	43	40	27	10	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	15	84	57	29	20	2	1
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)	27	18	78	53	19	13	7	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	18	83	56	24	16	5	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	18	69	47	19	13	19	13
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	11	76	51	26	18	9	6
The school is led and managed effectively	21	14	65	44	31	21	22	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	22	80	54	23	16	6	4

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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). 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">■ 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.



4 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Looe Community School, Sunrising, East Looe PL13 1NQ

On behalf of the inspection team I am writing to thank you for making us welcome when we visited the school recently and to tell you about our findings during the inspection. We found you to be responsible, articulate and well-behaved young people. We especially enjoyed your singing in 'free assembly'.

We found that your school is good. Examination results are improving and the school is working hard to address staff shortages. The quality of teaching is improving and there are good relationships between you and your teachers. The school is making better use of data to check you are making the progress you should. However, the use of marking and feedback is variable, resulting in some untidy or incomplete work.

The care and support provided by the school is outstanding and we were impressed with the curriculum which prepares you well for your future. We also felt that you make an excellent contribution to the local and wider community, such as contributing so positively to Ellie's Haven.

We have asked your headteacher and her staff to make some improvements:

- improve teaching and learning by sharing what works best
- improve communication with parents and carers and provide information about how they can support your learning.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection and very best wishes for your future happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf

Lead Inspector

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