

The Lord Silkin School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123582
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	340374
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	584
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Jones
Headteacher	Trevor Goddard (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 29 lessons, saw 29 teachers, and held meetings with a governor, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding, communications with parents and carers, and questionnaires from 94 parents and 119 students.

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

the full range of evidence on students' progress, particularly for girls and all groups of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities

- changes made to all aspects of provision, the extent of rapid and secure improvement and how effective the school is in ensuring equal opportunities
- the school's improvement record and quality of monitoring and evaluation regarding its capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

This is a small secondary school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. Over double the national average of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well above average. The school takes a small number of students with physical disabilities from across the borough. A high proportion of students join the school between Year 7 and the end of Year 11. The school has an acting headteacher who has been in post since April 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a rapidly improving school. Students are making much better progress than at the time of the last inspection, largely as a result of the substantial improvements made to teaching and learning. Teachers have experienced effective professional development, and determined action, particularly in the last year, has dealt effectively with inadequate teaching. As a result of this good management of teaching and learning, inspectors saw mainly lessons that were good or better and the satisfactory lessons contained significant strengths. Students work hard in lessons because teachers maintain a high pace and learning is regularly reviewed. The gap between the school's results and national expectations has reduced each year since the last inspection. The evidence from the school's increasingly robust monitoring of students' progress points to an acceleration of this trend in the last year. In all year groups students are now making good progress. However, the previous history of weak achievement means attainment is still too low and progress by the time students leave the school is not yet good. The progress students make is improving quickly and securely. In the less effective lessons the use of assessment is such that a minority of students do not consistently have quite enough opportunities to undertake work that is challenging.

Effective teaching and the good curriculum ensure students have positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. One student captured the views of many in stating that his option choices meant that he had the 'perfect package'. These positive attitudes are a major contributing factor to the good behaviour of students and in developing important attributes that are valued in the workplace. Although there are strengths in the school's engagement with parents, weaker links with a minority hinder the school's efforts to raise standards and improve attendance further.

Teaching and learning are very well led by a senior leader and the headteacher. There are also strengths in this regard at middle leadership level, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The strong focus on improving teaching has led to some aspects of the work of the school not receiving the same level of attention. For instance, there are deficiencies in the school's strategic planning. Equal opportunities are not sufficiently emphasised, including targets that fully reflect the need to monitor the progress made by all groups of students. There is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities of some senior staff. Opportunities to improve the school through positively involving students are under-developed.

Despite these shortcomings the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. The quality of teaching was satisfactory at the last inspection three years ago and it is now good. The school has effective systems in place for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. In addition the school is aware of most of its

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weaknesses, even though as yet it has not been able to make these a priority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of assessment by
 - ensuring lessons provide even more consistent opportunities for students of all abilities to undertake challenging work
 - developing questions and ways of managing responses so all students have to think more deeply about key ideas
 - marking to provide more useful feedback to students.
- Improve students' workplace skills by
 - engaging more effectively with all parents, particularly in order to improve attendance
 - increasing the opportunities students have to take responsibility by enabling them to contribute more positively to improving their school
 - developing students' cultural awareness through increased opportunities to interact with those not strongly represented in the school.
- Improve attainment so that it is at the national average by
 - ensuring all the schools plans take full account of the need to promote equal opportunities and are focused on improving the progress made by all students
 - producing an improvement plan that effectively communicates a longer-term vision for the school
 - ensuring senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students work diligently in lessons, responding especially well when teachers set clear time limits. Almost all students are aware of their targets because these are frequently referred to in lessons. When given the opportunity students are able to evaluate their work and identify improvements. In an outstanding child development lesson students took a great deal of responsibility for making the improvements needed to reach and sometimes exceed their challenging targets. Students with physical disabilities and those who receive additional support through the special needs department make good progress and attend well because of the well organised and flexible support that is provided. The majority of students identified as having special needs and/or disabilities have their needs met within lessons. They make the same progress as do all other groups of students. Students have made good progress for a number of years in science so results in this subject are above the national average. In English and mathematics students are now making better progress but results still remain below average. This

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picture is reflected in most other subjects although there are signs of better outcomes in vocational courses that have continuous forms of assessment. The school results in terms of 5 A* to G grades at GCSE have improved and are average.

Despite the school's effective systems for managing attendance, overall the current figure is just below average. Some students arrive at school, often in Years 10 and 11, with poor attendance records. The school is working closely with parents to rectify the situation. Students have opportunities to positively contribute through participation in a range of voluntary activities. Older students support younger ones in their mixed-age tutor groups. Although a school council provides some opportunities for students to take responsibility, they are justifiably of the opinion that arrangements to enable them to influence decision-making could be better. Students generally eat healthily but a minority do not take sufficient physical exercise. There are strengths in their social and moral development, a fact reflected in their considerate behaviour. In some outstanding lessons teachers were able to encourage a spiritual dimension by ensuring students had the time to reflect on their learning, for instance in considering the inequalities evident in apartheid South Africa. In other lessons, such opportunities were missed. Students learn about different cultures through lessons but there are relatively few opportunities for the majority of students to interact with those from different backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	4

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use a good range of resources to make lessons interesting, including information and communication technology. For instance, students enjoyed trying to 'beat the clock' when using a mathematics programme. In lessons students work quickly because teachers have high expectations of the amount that will be produced. In the very best lessons teachers use assessment well to vary the pace of learning. Some teachers boost learning by giving additional time, often insisting on paired discussions when considering and challenging ideas. A strong recent focus on planning is improving the consistency of lessons. Students almost always experience a wide variety of well-timed activities that keep them actively involved. A strong positive feature is the use of review and feedback during and at the end of lessons. These strategies clarify what students of different abilities need to do to excel and often result in good or outstanding progress. In better lessons students' learning is reinforced through opportunities to apply their learning in interesting contexts, sometimes linked to tricky examination questions. In less effective lessons teachers tend to accept answers from the same willing volunteers rather than challenging all students. This contrasts with a majority of lessons where teachers deploy a variety of approaches to questioning, strongly influenced by the accurate assessment of students' capabilities. There are good examples of marking which helps students, particularly in English and science. However, other marking offers encouragement but little guidance as to how students can improve. Assessment is used well in Year 11 to target interventions that are enabling students to gain higher grades. This practice is less evident in other year groups.

The curriculum is effectively adapted for vulnerable learners. For instance, 'mini-school' provides a more primary-type curriculum to ease transition of a minority of students in their transfer from primary school. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is particularly strong because of the wide variety of opportunities that personalise students' learning. Partnerships with other providers allow the school to 'punch above its weight' in terms of the vocational options available. Students enjoy the opportunities they have to undertake taster courses and experience further education. This helps them make considered choices, particularly post-16. Students have useful opportunities to work in mixed-age tutor groups when undertaking enterprise activity. Work experience, vocational courses and effective careers advice all contribute to the development of workplace skills needed for students' future economic well-being. There is scope for further developing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

There is a wide array of support, including some available through partnerships with external agencies. The care and support provided have allowed the school to avoid any permanent or fixed-term exclusions. Students and parents praise the support the school provides although older students thought they could do more to support younger ones. The support for vulnerable students is first-class and is carefully monitored by the

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school's dynamic special needs co-ordinator who leads a dedicated team of teaching assistants. Lesson plans indicate the various needs of students, although rather too often teachers do not identify the adaptations needed to meet these needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

During a period of uncertainty caused by changes of headship the school has managed to maintain and accelerate the rate at which it is improving. Leaders have been conspicuously successful in improving teaching and learning so that a grade boundary has been crossed since the last inspection. Leaders have skilfully used a combination of professional development and decisive action to eradicate less effective practice. Leaders have recognised the strengths within the school and exploited these well in developing greater consistency. For instance, they have successfully linked the science and mathematics departments. In addition the school has used the support of the local authority well. The school uses a comprehensive range of approaches, including lesson observation, learning walks and data to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The school has also recognised that it needs to spread the effective approaches to assessment in Year 11 throughout the school.

Governors are actively involved in the school, including in strategic planning and holding leaders to account. They have used the guidance provided by the School Improvement Partner well to improve leadership in the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and are well placed to make a greater contribution to strategic leadership. The school engages with parents reasonably well. For instance, parental views are regularly sampled and influence decision-making. The school ensures the vast majority of parents are involved discussing student progress with form tutors, although there is recognition that an important minority of hard-to-reach parents are less involved. The school has addressed some aspects related to equal opportunities so as to ensure there are not significant differences in the progress made by different groups. Currently girls are receiving effective additional mentoring support in recognition of the fact they are not making quite as much progress as boys. The school has not as yet adopted a sufficiently strategic approach to equal opportunities and there are inconsistencies in how well the school monitors the outcomes for all groups in the school.

Safeguarding arrangements are good because the school takes account of student and parental views and has adopted recommended good practice in all of its work in this

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area. The school has established an effective email base system so it is able to pick up any concerns at an earliest stage. As part of its response to community cohesion, the school is beginning to develop links with others that serve communities that are ethnically different. There are particular strengths in terms of the school and local community. However the school's audit of this area and its planning are under-developed, therefore actions are not being undertaken with sufficient urgency and there is limited impact, particularly in relation to the global and national dimension.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents agreed with all of the statements except a small minority disagreed with the following.

The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour.

The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns.

Inspectors investigated these concerns and concluded that the school generally deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good and the school does well to avoid the need to exclude students because of their behaviour. Inspectors investigated the effectiveness with which the school takes account of parental suggestions and concerns and found that the school regularly surveys parental opinions and these influence decision-making. However, inspectors concluded that there was scope to improve the effectiveness of engagement with parents. For this reason inspectors have included this aspect in the section 'What the school should do to improve'. Improvements to this aspect should also allow parents to raise issues more

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easily, such as those related to behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Lord Silkin 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 584 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	26	60	64	7	7	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	23	24	66	70	3	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	29	52	55	12	13	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	17	65	69	9	10	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	19	20	69	73	4	4	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	19	57	61	13	14	5	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	13	68	72	9	10	1	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)	20	21	57	61	4	4	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	17	68	72	6	6	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	22	53	56	9	10	5	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	12	63	67	15	16	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	18	66	70	7	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	27	57	61	8	9	2	2

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.



11 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Lord Silkin School, Telford, TF3 1FA

I would like to thank the school for making us feel welcome, and those students we interviewed for their comments which influenced the conclusions we reached.

Lord Silkin is a satisfactory school that is rapidly improving. This is helping to improve your examination results and reduce the gap between them and the national average. Teaching is getting better because staff work very hard to plan lessons which actively engage you in learning. We are impressed with the positive attitudes you have to learning. You behave very well and the vast majority of you are considerate to others.

We have asked the school to improve a minority of less effective lessons by ensuring you undertake work that really challenges all of you, regardless of your ability. We think that your teachers' marking could provide you with more guidance on how you can improve. You told us that you would like to have more influence on decision-making in the school. In response to this we have suggested that the school should increase the opportunities you have to take responsibility for making improvements to your school. For instance, older students might mentor the younger ones, and you could improve the way the school council operates. Finally, we have suggested that the school should strive even harder to ensure the school's results reach the national average as soon as possible. You can help improve your school by being willing to give your opinions about what will make your school better. In addition, you can also continue to do your best when undertaking the more challenging work you should be given in all lessons and by attending school every day.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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