

Limehurst High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120243
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339648
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Kilner
Headteacher	Jonathan Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Over half of inspectors' time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors observed 22 part lessons involving 23 of the 27 teachers, and also made short visits to three personal development lessons delivered by form tutors. Meetings were held with parents, groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, records of monitoring, governors' documents and students' work. They reviewed 223 parental, 125 student and 29 staff questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of students' learning and progress in lessons and as indicated by the school's assessment data
- the wider outcomes for students, including their behaviour and attendance
- the key features of teaching and assessment which support the school's evaluation of them as outstanding
- how the curriculum responds to students' needs and the impact of the school's specialist status
- the effectiveness of leaders in evaluating performance and planning for improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. Just under half of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and most of these speak English as an additional language. Students of Bangladeshi and Indian background form the largest groups. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The most common needs are moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social. The school became a specialist sports college in September 2008. It has achieved Healthy Schools Status and the International School Award. The headteacher took up post in September 2009. At the time of the inspection, the local authority had begun a consultation process on the closure of the school as part of the 'building schools for the future' programme.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Limehurst is an outstanding school. The many positive comments recorded by parents in questionnaires included, 'This brilliant school is at the heart of our community' where students are 'engaged and supported in their every endeavour' by 'staff who look after children's needs in the most professional and compassionate way'. The school has a very strong sense of vision and direction, based on getting the best from each individual. Teachers and other adults know students very well and are highly committed to their care. Students feel safe and their parents agree that they are. There are excellent relationships across the school and with the community. As a result, students feel secure and learn well. They make outstanding progress from attainment which is below average when they join Year 7. Results are improving and are above average for Level 5 but average for Level 6 when they leave Year 9.

Students' personal development is impressive. They are confident and friendly, making visitors welcome, and they are always willing to talk. They transfer this positive attitude to their learning, working well together, listening respectfully and enjoying practical activities. They have a clear sense of what is expected from them and value the reward systems which recognise their effort and achievement. They understand the need to be healthy and benefit from the improved activities available through the sports specialism. Students understand and greatly respect each other's faiths and cultures.

Teachers bring the best out of students by challenging and encouraging them. Relationships are excellent and there are high expectations. As a result, progress is outstanding. Lessons are well planned but the different objectives set for students are not always followed up by a range of tasks or materials targeted at specific groups. Teachers assess students in a variety of ways. There is some excellent marking but also some variation in the quality of feedback to students on how to improve their work. The curriculum meets the needs of students very well and there are increasing opportunities to study themes over a day or a week, combining skills from different subjects. There is an excellent range of trips, events and activities, especially for a small school.

Leadership is clear and decisive. Morale is high and there is excellent teamwork. As a result, practice is consistent and very effective. The school has continued to improve since its last inspection with results in English and science rising. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now widely used across subjects. Students'

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progress is carefully monitored and there are excellent strategies for meeting particular needs. These show the school's strong capacity to improve further, although the school is currently extending the involvement of middle leaders and governors in detailed evaluation to influence planning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by
 - increasing the proportion of students who achieve higher levels in assessments at the end of Key Stage 3
 - ensuring that all teachers challenge students of differing attainment in lessons so that they meet the different objectives set for them
 - developing greater consistency in teachers' comments and feedback on students' work so that it is clear how they can improve further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students start in Year 7 with attainment which is below average. By the end of Year 9, in 2009, students' attainment, based on teacher assessments, was broadly average. It has improved in science, information and communication technology and physical education over the last three years, stimulated by the school's specialist status. Attainment at Level 5 was above average in all core subjects but it was average at Level 6. The gender gap in performance between boys and girls is narrower than that found nationally. Students make outstanding progress as shown by the school's assessment and value added data, including those who speak English as an additional language, especially of Indian and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least good progress despite often complex difficulties with behaviour and learning. In the lessons observed, students make at least good progress and show real commitment to learning. They settle to work promptly, collaborate successfully, enjoy participating in discussion and learning actively. They listen carefully to each other and show interest in each other's views. They enjoy solving problems and show initiative and self-reliance when challenged to do so.

Students from a very wide range of backgrounds develop as confident, articulate and tolerant young people as they move through the school. They show respect for each other and understand different faiths and cultures. Students' behaviour around school is outstanding and produces a calm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Their behaviour in lessons is also excellent and they share constructive and trusting relationships with their teachers. Students say they feel extremely safe at school. There are few instances of bullying and racial incidents and these are dealt with effectively and quickly by staff.

Provision for adopting healthy lifestyles is outstanding for students and those parents and carers who attend activities offered under the school's sports specialism. Students are fully aware of the need for healthy lifestyles from the extensive

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coverage across the curriculum, and the vast majority follow this advice. Students take part in a very wide range of school activities, including many clubs, trips, events and projects which contribute strongly to their fitness and cultural awareness. They take responsibility willingly as form captains, sports captains, young consultants and buddies. They also contribute through links with the community in visits, concerts and charities. The school council is a vibrant group who feel highly valued on a wide range of issues from drafting school policies to improving facilities. Students are extremely well prepared for transition both on joining the school and moving on to the upper school. They develop a high level of cooperation when working on collaborative tasks. Attendance is at the national level and improving because of close support for individuals and families which has reduced the number of persistent absentees.

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	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Very strong teaching leads to students making outstanding progress in their learning. Relationships in lessons are excellent and there are high expectations for behaviour, attitude and effort. In the best lessons, teachers constantly challenge students to explain or extend their learning. They use targeted questions and a range of activities which interest and engage students, including increasing use of computers and interactive whiteboards. Students respond particularly well when they are encouraged to solve problems or learn by doing. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly, setting different expectations for students of different attainment. However, the work that students then complete is not always

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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matched to those different objectives. Teaching assistants provide very effective support in lessons. Students know their targets and teachers often refer to the skills required to achieve particular levels. However, although there is some very good marking, there is still too much variation in the quality of teachers’ comments and the feedback to help students to improve their work.

Excellent links with local schools ensure good progression from Year 6 and in to Year 10. Close monitoring of individuals to identify their learning needs leads to an impressive range of intervention strategies, challenge and support, with opportunities to participate in carpentry, family learning and girls’ engineering. Gifted and talented students benefit from science projects and master classes. The school has used the increased flexibility in the Key Stage 3 curriculum very well, with themed weeks, themed days and pairing of subjects to focus on key skills and cross-curricular topics. Creative partnerships and links with the university have enhanced learning about enterprise. The sports specialism has helped to raise attainment and improve students’ progress. There is an excellent range of additional activities and most students participate in some type of physical activity or sport.

The vast majority of parents feel that their children are safe and exceedingly well cared for due to the high commitment of all the staff. Students said they felt very safe and that there was always somebody they could talk to if they had a problem or concern. Anything they raise is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school knows students well and makes excellent connections with families. This has helped to successfully tackle persistent absences from a small minority of students. Robust strategies, such as first day calls to parents when there is any unexplained absence, ensure regular attendance at school. Accurate assessment of students with special educational needs enables specific targets to be set and monitored effectively. Students at an early stage of speaking English rapidly integrate into the school environment because of excellent support in class. Very effective home school liaison provides outstanding contact with families, supported by a very committed team within the school and local agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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?

The headteacher, senior staff and governors set a very clear direction for the school. This is widely shared by staff, students and many parents, some of whom met with inspectors to voice their support for the school. The commitment and morale of staff

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is high. There is excellent teamwork which ensures that the school’s ethos is consistently promoted. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on thorough analysis of performance. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are well established, especially for students’ progress and the quality of teaching. The use of assessment is not as consistent across all subjects although there is some exemplary practice.

The schools’ wide range of ethnicity and backgrounds is fully integrated into one community. Equality of opportunity is central to the school’s aims and no group of students performs markedly less well than any other. Students speak proudly of the strong sense of respect and very good relationships in the school. The school promotes community cohesion impressively through the curriculum and a significant range of opportunities given its size. There are active links with schools elsewhere in England, Europe and Bangladesh. There are extensive links within the local community and an audit of needs was used extensively in the school’s bid for specialist sports status. This led to highly effective community activities which evaluation shows are having an impact on community health. Students are kept safe by good safeguarding practice which more than complies with national requirements.

Since the last inspection, results in English and science have improved. Students’ progress is rigorously monitored and remains outstanding for almost all groups. The availability and use of information and communication technology has increased and there is a clear plan for its application across subjects. Students’ personal development remains outstanding and there is a very strong sense of community. Despite this, the headteacher has begun to review systems to improve evaluation and planning by involving middle leaders more extensively. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ensure that they visit regularly to see work at first-hand.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Views of parents and carers

Over half of parents and carers returned a questionnaire. A group of over 20 parents visited the school to speak to inspectors. The very large majority of parents and carers were positive about the school and many commented appreciatively on the commitment and care of staff. The proportion agreeing strongly with statements was substantial. Almost all indicated that their child enjoyed school and felt safe. A very few parents and carers made comments about behaviour or bullying. Inspectors asked students, observed breaks and reviewed records but the evidence suggested that systems were in place to deal effectively with any incidents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Limehurst 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 223 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 392 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	122	55	96	43	5	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	144	65	73	33	3	1	2	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	125	56	88	39	9	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	127	57	86	39	8	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	134	60	82	37	4	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	104	47	102	46	11	5	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	102	46	110	49	11	5	0	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)	116	52	93	42	7	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	104	47	106	48	11	5	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	126	57	82	37	9	4	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	94	42	111	50	13	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	131	59	82	37	3	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	151	68	68	30	3	1	0	0

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 all 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 pupils' 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.

29 January 2010

Dear students



Inspection of Limehurst High School, Loughborough LE11 1NH

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons, in meetings and at breaks. You helped us to find out about the school. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. This letter is to tell you what we found on our inspection.

Your school provides you with an outstanding education. By the end of Year 9 last year, students achieved results which were broadly average but there is an improving trend. You learn very well in lessons and your progress is outstanding. We saw that you concentrate well, work together purposefully and listen to each other's point of view. You learn best when you are challenged to solve a problem or in practical tasks. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school was excellent. You told us that you feel safe and that there are very few incidents of bullying. We were very impressed with the way you respect each other and understand the different faiths and cultures represented in your school. You benefit from an exciting curriculum and a wide range of activities, trips and clubs. The school's sports status has helped to really expand opportunities for you and your families. Your teachers know you well and they make sure that any particular needs that you have are met. The headteacher and staff set high expectations for you and they are committed to making your school even better. They take your views into account and give you good opportunities to take responsibilities. It was clear to us that your school is very important to the community it serves.

We asked the school to improve some aspects of its work. Although results are improving, especially for the number of you achieving Level 5 in the Year 9 assessments, not as many of you attain Levels 6 and 7. We asked the staff to focus on improving this and you can help by trying your hardest to achieve those higher levels. We suggested that teachers plan to use different tasks and resources in lessons to help you achieve your target level. We saw some very helpful comments on your work to show you what you need to do to improve. However, this was not the case in all your books and we have asked teachers to be consistent in helping you through their comments.

I am sure that your school will continue to improve. I wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

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