

Lansdowne School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique reference number | 100654 |
| Local authority | Lambeth |
| Inspection number | 376434 |
| Inspection dates | 1–2 February 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Stuart Charlton |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 105 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Susan Stuart |
| Headteacher | Linda Adams |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29–30 September 2008 |
| School address | Argyll Close London SW9 9QL |
| Telephone number | 020 7737 3713 |
| Fax number | 020 7738 6877 |
| Email address | executiveheadteacher@lansdowne.lambeth.sch.uk |

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Introduction

Inspection team

Stuart Charlton

Additional inspector

Lynne Kaufmann

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. One inspector spent two days in school and the other, one day. Inspectors spent approximately eight hours observing teaching, which included visits to twelve lessons and observations of ten teachers. Most were joint observations with the headteacher or senior staff. The lead inspector carried out short observations across five lessons with the headteacher to look at levels of engagement and behaviour and a scrutiny of work in pupils' books. In addition, inspectors held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that related to self-evaluation and development planning, assessment data and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors evaluated questionnaire responses from 14 parents and carers, 47 pupils and six staff. They examined a sample of the pupils' work and an inspector listened to a small group of pupils reading.

Information about the school

Lansdowne is a small school catering for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, generally related to severe learning difficulties and/or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The overwhelming majority of pupils have communication difficulties. Over one third have autistic spectrum disorders and the complexity of pupils' needs is increasing. Most pupils come from the local area, which is socially and culturally very diverse. About one third of the pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high; many are young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, and are already known to the social services.

Since the previous inspection there have been significant senior management and staffing changes and an executive headteacher was appointed in September 2011. The school operates in a 'soft' federation with another school in the borough. The school has been awarded the Sportsmark and Activemark and has Advanced Healthy Schools status. It is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Young Enterprise.

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

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|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | 4 |
| Achievement of pupils | 4 |
| Quality of teaching | 4 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 4 |
| Leadership and management | 4 |

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has not been effective enough in alerting the local authority to the school's difficulties, remedial actions have not been pursued with sufficient urgency and the school has gone into a period of severe decline. Since the appointment of the executive headteacher there has been improvement, especially to systems to record and analyse data about pupils' progress and their achievements. There have also been some improvements in teaching and there is a new behaviour management policy. However, these changes have not had time to show sufficient impact on the outcomes for pupils.
- The new headteacher has a very clear understanding of priorities for improvement. The decisions made through a thorough review of senior management personnel and responsibilities are well conceived but have not yet been fully implemented. At this stage there is insufficient capacity in the senior leadership of the school to sustain the recent improvements.
- There are too many lessons in which teaching and learning are inadequate, with inconsistencies in teachers' planning and the range of approaches used, as well as in the assessment of pupils' progress and performance. This means that many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable and over time they have not achieved well enough. Pupils' communication skills are a particular weakness, and the curriculum is inadequate in this area. Pupils are, however, making better progress in mathematics.
- The new behaviour management policy and strategies are starting to have a

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positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour. However, there are still inconsistencies in which this new way of working is operated by staff and, in some lessons, poor behaviour disrupts the learning of others.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by fully responding to the conclusions of the strategic review of personnel, roles and responsibilities in order to build capacity and bring about improvements in the outcomes for pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers always:
 - use a wide range of approaches and strategies to fully motivate all pupils
 - clearly identify in their planning the needs of individual pupils and how they will be challenged, and in lessons use this information to drive forward pupils' learning
 - consistently use the newly-developed behaviour management systems and strategies.
- Improve pupils' communication skills by:
 - formalising and applying a clear policy for teachers' use of signing and pictorial strategies across the curriculum
 - ensuring that reading sessions at the start of the day are used consistently well
 - addressing the weaknesses older pupils have in the methods and strategies they use to decode and synthesise words.
- Ensure there is greater accuracy in the assessments teachers make about pupils' progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is inadequate. The majority of parents and carers are pleased with the progress made by their children, but in the past there have been few meetings at which the school has clearly explained to them what they should expect of their children. Pupils are less enthusiastic about their learning. A number said that they were bored and others stated that they found the work too hard. There was a feeling that although behaviour management had improved it depended on individual staff. Despite the positive views of parents and carers, there is a legacy of underachievement across the school, particularly for older pupils, which is only just beginning to be tackled. Progress for too many pupils is still not good enough, and so they are dropping further behind. Inspectors found that pupils are not always enthused by the learning activities they are given, and they sometimes find work too hard or too easy. The communication needs of pupils, including those who speak

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English as an additional language, are not sufficiently taken into account in teachers' planning.

The recently implemented reading sessions at the start of the day are helping to improve pupils' reading skills, but they are dependent on the enthusiasm and skills of individual staff and these are too variable to bring about sustained improvement. There are weaknesses in the methods and strategies pupils have been taught to use to decode and synthesise words, particularly among some of the older pupils. The school does not have a clear policy for teachers' use of signing and pictorial strategies to underpin and develop communication skills. Consequently, these weaknesses do not support learning effectively in other areas of the curriculum and limit the progress of all groups.

Progress in mathematics is now satisfactory for nearly all pupils, and for some it is good. The school has invested time in developing mathematics teaching and many pupils say that they now enjoy mathematics and take pride in their work. This is based on the small steps learning programme that has been developed. In practical subjects, such as design and technology, pupils enjoy the hands-on experiences that are provided and say that learning is fun in these lessons.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is inadequate. Practice was too variable and too much teaching was inadequate. The planned curriculum gives appropriate guidance for the development of numeracy skills but does not give enough structure for the teaching of literacy and communication. A further weakness is that it does not meet pupils' needs sufficiently closely. Often the school's assessments of pupils' starting points do not give an accurate picture of previous learning against which teachers can plan activities. Sometimes they have relied too heavily on information from previous schools. This has resulted in teachers planning work that is not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs, particularly in terms of their communication and listening skills. In some English lessons, less-able pupils were asked to answer questions in a pictorial format about an excerpt taken from the play *Romeo and Juliet* delivered entirely in 'Shakespearean English'. This was much too hard for them.

In the better lessons, teachers have the confidence to use their own assessment of pupils' needs and vary the planned activities so they engage and motivate pupils. In mathematics and in design and technology, for example, teachers' planning usually identifies the needs of the pupils and how these will be met. In these lessons, pupils are challenged to give of their best. They enjoy learning and work proceeds at a good pace.

Teaching is not having sufficient impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because even where the content might cover these areas, it is undermined by weak teaching. Too often teachers rely on worksheets to keep pupils occupied while they deal with behaviour issues generated by the lack of pupil engagement. The work in pupils' books is sometimes incomplete and of poor quality,

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with little written comment about how to improve and inaccurately assessed as being of good quality. Parents and carers are broadly positive about the teaching in the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils and their parents and carers say that they now feel safe in school, they indicate that this has not always been the case. Along with the staff, they say that there have been significant improvements recently in behaviour and how poor behaviour is dealt with in school. A new behaviour management policy has been developed and implemented but is still not yet fully embedded. Poor behaviour by individual pupils is not always challenged effectively and the learning of others is then disrupted. Such episodes undermine the school's efforts to eliminate underachievement or improve pupils' behaviour.

Pupils are keen to acknowledge that the newly-established 'Quiet Room' is having a positive impact on their performance. During the inspection it was noted that some pupils had gained sufficient confidence to use the system to good effect in beginning to manage their own behaviour by self-referral. Pupils say that staff help them and listen to their concerns. Often these relate to personal and behavioural issues and pupils are grateful for such support.

Pupils spoke with confidence about different types of bullying and were very clear about what to do should such incidents occur. Some indicated that there was still some physical bullying, but felt this was generally dealt with well by staff.

The school has effective systems to promote attendance, including its first day absence procedures. These have only recently been implemented with vigour; attendance is improving and is now broadly average.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are inadequate. The instabilities at senior management level since the previous inspection have had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, and on the ethos of the school. Action to improve the quality of teaching has not been pursued with sufficient urgency by senior managers. Since the previous inspection the complexity of pupils' needs has increased significantly, but the development of teachers' skills has not kept pace. The accuracy of information made available to the governing body has not been sufficient and governors have not challenged the school effectively. There have been delays in bringing these issues to the attention of the local authority and bringing in external support, even though the problems were clearly identified by the school's improvement partner at an early stage.

Recent actions, resulting in the establishment of the federation and the appointment of an executive headteacher, have been a catalyst for much needed change. The previous delays have allowed some issues to become almost endemic and the

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changes that have been made are too recent to have had sufficient impact on driving improvement. At this stage there is insufficient capacity in the senior management structure to support the new headteacher's drive to improve the school.

The new headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of the majority of staff. She has a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has made these clear to the governing body and the local authority. The recent school development plan she has drawn up identifies well-devised ways forward. She is aware that the curriculum does not sufficiently support the development of pupils' communication skills nor meet all their needs effectively. The curriculum identifies some opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but classroom strategies are not sufficiently consistent for this to be effective. The school's safeguarding procedures have recently been brought into line with government requirements, but the promotion of equality and the ways in which discrimination are tackled are too variable and do not have a sufficiently clear whole-school focus.

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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lansdowne School, London SW9 9QL

Thank you for the help you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We were very pleased to talk to so many of you and join you in your lessons.

We found that Lansdowne is not providing you with a good enough education. Although you all told us that it has got better recently, it must improve a lot so that all of you do well. We have said it needs 'special measures' so it gets extra help.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that all lessons are fun and exciting and work is not too hard or too easy. We want them to help you to improve your reading and communication. We have asked the teachers to make sure bad behaviour does not disturb everyone.

We have asked the people who are in charge of Lansdowne School to work with the new headteacher to make sure that things improve rapidly.

We were very pleased to see how many of you were learning to improve your behaviour and your work. We liked the way you were using the 'Quiet Room' to help you in this. We saw that you are doing better in mathematics. We know you will continue to do your best so that Lansdowne improves rapidly.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton
Lead inspector

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