

Liskeard School and Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112061
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	357039
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2011
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1173
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Davina Finch
Headteacher	Donna Bryant
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 34 lessons taught by 33 teachers and held meetings with students, staff, parents and carers and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, records, assessments and other documents including 480 questionnaire responses from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well does current assessment information support the school's view of improvements in attainment and progress, especially in mathematics?
- Does teaching have sufficient quality and consistency to raise attainment?
- Has a pattern of falling attainment in the sixth form been halted?

Information about the school

Liskeard School and Community College is larger than average. It is a specialist school in engineering. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. Almost all students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The largest group of these has behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school includes specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, specialising in autism. At the time of the inspection, this provision catered for a very small group of full-time students. These students are taught for most of their time alongside mainstream students. A nursery attached to the school was inspected separately.

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 satisfactory school. Recent changes to senior staff have improved the capacity of leadership and management. Developments to raise attainment are underway and, in consequence, learning and progress are improving securely and quickly. ♦

Students' progress is satisfactory but is not good because too many lessons remain no better than satisfactory. In these lessons, activities are not fully tuned to promote students' interest, pace can be too slow and learning is insufficiently consolidated in the closing sessions. Marking offers little advice to students on how to improve their work and while most students have targets, many do not know how to reach them. However, a wide range of recently introduced focused support activities for students is leading to much faster progress, especially in mathematics. Attainment remains low but is rising. The sixth form provides a satisfactory education and improvements have halted the previous fall in attainment.

Students are well cared for and the school is a safe place. Students know who to turn to should they have concerns and are confident they receive effective support. Year and form tutors are well informed about each student's progress and personal development, and they initiate effective assistance. This ensures generally good personal outcomes for students. The curriculum promotes their good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. The school council and other representative groups involve many students in school life and activities in the wider community.

The curriculum provides a wide range of interesting courses and benefits from good partnerships that enables the school to run courses, such as 'The Diploma'. There are exciting enrichment activities in out-of-school hours, especially in sport. Good links with schools and communities across the country and the world help broaden students' horizons and their understanding of different cultures.

Self-evaluation by middle leaders does not always point the way to improvements clearly enough and staff have not followed up on all areas of concern. These leaders focused more on teaching than learning so students' progress has only recently improved. However, senior leaders have focused on addressing areas of weakness and there is now a trend of improvement, particularly in achievement. The school has begun to embed the essential systems required to ensure continuing progress but the impact of these relatively recent changes has not been felt fully. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor the school more rigorously, especially students' learning, to build and develop teachers' classroom skills.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning so that at least 70% of lessons are good or better by December 2011 by making sure teachers:
 - promote good progress through involving all students in active learning
 - maintain a brisk pace at all stages of lessons
 - use the closing elements of lessons effectively to check on and consolidate learning.
- By December 2011, develop teachers' marking and the way they use targets so that students are fully aware of their standards of work and how they can improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment is low. Satisfactory teaching and learning promote sound progress for all groups of students. While there are inconsistencies in teaching, most lessons are characterised by good relationships and emphasise what is to be learnt at the outset. Year 11 lessons demonstrate how to maximise marks in examinations by providing students with good preparation for GCSE and other tests. An outstanding science lesson had been carefully prepared to enable students to conduct a number of chemical investigations. At their conclusion, students then attempted a test paper related to this topic that demonstrated excellent learning. However, in general, teaching is less demanding, does not provide enough interesting activities and the pace of many lessons can be too leisurely, so learning is steady rather than rapid.

The school is aware that progress could be quicker and has implemented many additional activities to help students achieve their full potential. Assessments identify underachievement and trigger concerted action. For example, in mathematics, class sizes have been reduced and selected students are taught individually or in very small groups. Mentoring of students in all subjects is highly focused and revision sessions are closely targeted to specific needs. These initiatives have led to a sharp rise in progress in recent months, especially in mathematics, which had formerly been a concern. Careful inclusion of all students means that achievement for all groups, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. The effective integration of students with autism into many classes means that their achievement is satisfactory.

Behaviour is satisfactory and most students enjoy school through relating positively towards one another and staff. Where teaching is less engaging, there is sometimes low-level disturbance which staff do not challenge effectively and, as a result, learning slows. There is occasional bullying but most students are happy that it is firmly dealt with. Students' participation in the school and wider community is often enthusiastic. They help young people, participate in charity events and are engaged in school decisions, such as revising the school uniform. Attendance is improving and is above average. Students keenly reflect on their experiences and those of others and have a good understanding of the multicultural aspects of the country.

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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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is well adapted to cater for all needs and offers an interesting variety of courses. Those available for lower-ability students are particularly popular. There is good evidence that students placed on vocational courses have improving outcomes because of raised attendance, confidence and self-esteem. Off-site provision helps to develop students' work skills in courses such as engineering and construction. There is satisfactory provision for students with specific learning needs, including those with autism. Students are delighted with the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are offered and these are justifiably popular.

Too many satisfactory lessons do too little to raise attainment. In the best lessons, there is a drive for improvement and teachers have high expectations that students strive to meet. In other lessons, while learning objectives are clear, activities are not sufficiently varied to promote good concentration and there are few urgent deadlines. The closing sessions of lessons are often very brief and miss opportunities to check on and consolidate learning and signpost future activities. For example, students worked lethargically in one lesson that lacked varied, challenging activities with no deadlines set. Continuous off-task conversation was also evident, so learning was slow and progress was inadequate. ❖

Learning is further held back by weaknesses in marking students' work. Comments provide praise but not advice. In consequence, many books are scruffy and students are unsure of

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the next steps in their learning. Although exercise books include students' target grades, many are unaware how they should go about reaching their targets.

The effective incorporation into classroom activities of those students with autism and other students with special educational needs and/or disabilities promotes satisfactory learning. These students benefit from well-informed and effectively deployed teaching assistants. Well-targeted support benefits many students and there are instances where this has helped them to overcome barriers to development and learning. Good-quality advice and guidance about future options and carefully crafted transfer activities limit the stresses of students' transition into and out of school and between key stages. High staffing levels in the specially resourced provision ensure that students with autism are well cared for and safe. Outside agencies are employed judiciously to help students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Rigorous procedures to follow up absences have improved attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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?

The new senior management team has started to get to grips with the school's weaknesses. Thorough analysis of assessment data has improved its understanding of weaknesses and led to strategies to boost progress. Senior leaders have clearly communicated their ambition for improvements and this is increasingly shared by staff. Plans for the future identify the relevant priorities and outline well-considered actions to address them.

Although there are good arrangements to enable both senior and middle leaders to monitor their areas of responsibility, practice tends to be inconsistent and lacking rigour. In consequence, such monitoring has had too little impact on outcomes for students, especially on their learning. However, senior leaders' recent actions to tackle progress have been powerful. They are already having an impact on progress across the school, especially in Year 11 where assessments indicate a rapid upturn in achievement. Increasingly good provision for different groups of students has evened out variations in performance, ensuring satisfactory equality of opportunity. The inclusive nature of the school and good pastoral care ensure no discrimination.

Leadership and management of both the managed provision and special educational needs and/or disabilities as a whole are satisfactory. Each student's needs are well known and there are good arrangements to provide each with the appropriate teaching assistant support. However, record keeping and planning are inefficient. This sometimes limits students' progress by not recognising when improvements have been achieved.

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The governing body shares the school's ambition. With many new members, it is actively seeking training, particularly in understanding assessment data, to improve its capacity to challenge the school. Monitoring systems are in place and there are good methods to gather the views of parents, carers and students. The governing body monitors safeguarding thoroughly. Safeguarding policies are up to date and adhered to. All Staff receive comprehensive training. Students have good knowledge of the best way to ensure their personal safety and are aware of systems that allow non-staff access to the site.

The school provides parents and carers with regular information about school life and their children's progress. The school regularly seeks their views through surveys. Effective liaison with parents and carers of students facing challenging circumstances encourages their support. Most parents and carers are positive about school and have few concerns. Partnerships with a variety of institutions are beneficial. Links with other secondary schools enable a broader curriculum to be offered with increased opportunities for students, especially in vocational learning. There are good links with local primary schools through the school's engineering specialism. Outside agencies provide specialist advice and improved care.

The school works successfully to extend students' understanding of different values and lives, especially of complex, multicultural societies. Good links with schools in contrasting environments, such as in London, South Africa and Palestine, stimulate students' understanding and interest. Students have good opportunities to contribute to the local community through various charitable activities and links with older people.

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress and their success rate in national examinations is broadly average, with few variations between different subjects and groups. Students

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develop sensible, mature attitudes to their studies and many make active contributions to school and local community life. Attendance is broadly average.

Students are well supported by staff and warm relationships are positive inducements to progress. In the best lessons observed, such as a Year 12 business studies class, a mixture of well-planned activities skilfully supported by the teacher led to good progress. Better teaching is leading to improved attainment. Effective care and guidance, particularly with the university admissions process, help students to prepare well for the future. The curriculum meets the needs of most and prepares them well for the next phase in their lives. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities.

Leaders know the strengths of the sixth form and what requires improvement. Regular monitoring uses various data sources to track progress and identify concerns. Development plans correctly focus on raising attainment and there is recent evidence of an upturn in students' progress. There is good engagement with parents and carers and the sixth form provides a safe environment.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The percentage of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was above the average for secondary schools. Most parents and carers are happy with their children's experience of school. However, small minorities of respondents are concerned with the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour, the way it takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns and how the school promotes healthy lifestyles. Inspection evidence indicates that behaviour is dealt with satisfactorily and that procedures have improved, that the school regularly takes account of parent's and carers' views and that the promotion of students' health is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Liskeard School and Community College 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 480 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1173 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	19	306	64	66	14	15	3
The school keeps my child safe	105	22	337	70	28	6	6	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	109	23	317	66	45	9	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	95	20	311	65	53	11	11	2
The teaching is good at this school	59	12	343	71	51	11	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	13	318	66	71	15	11	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	10	303	63	96	20	10	2
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)	77	16	310	65	38	8	8	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	13	329	70	48	10	12	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	14	276	58	95	20	22	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	11	295	62	81	17	19	4
The school is led and managed effectively	67	14	337	70	36	8	13	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	93	19	313	65	52	11	12	3

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



10 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Liskeard School and Community College, Liskeard, PL14 3EA

Thank you for your courteous welcome when the inspectors recently visited the school; it was a pleasure to meet you.

Liskeard School and Community College provides a satisfactory education. Attainment is low but there are signs that it is rapidly improving and leading to better progress in all subjects, including mathematics. You are well cared for and your personal development is mainly good, with strengths in your understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and in your involvement in the community. Behaviour is satisfactory but could be better in some lessons, particularly when your concentration fails.

Teaching is satisfactory and some is good, but too many lessons are too slow and do not engage you fully. Marking does not always provide you with useful information. The curriculum is good and provides a wide range of relevant and interesting courses.

The school's leadership has recently been strengthened and teachers are working hard to boost your progress. Partnerships with other schools both near and far help you to develop a fuller understanding of the wider world. To improve, inspectors have asked the school to focus on:

- ensuring teaching is checked up on with greater rigour, so that more lessons are good or better
- improving teaching so that lessons are more active, have better pace and conclude with what has been learned
- marking your work more thoroughly to offer you clear advice on how to improve and reach your targets.

You can play your part by making sure you always behave well. Once again, thank you for all your help.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector

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