

Lawnswood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108055
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	288014
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Barnett 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1564
6th form	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mr M Davidovic
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002
School address	Ring Road West Park Leeds West Yorkshire LS16 5AG
Telephone number	0113 2844020
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lawnswood School is a large comprehensive school with more than 50 partner primary schools. It has a diverse catchment area, covering areas of high social deprivation. There are higher than average numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language. The proportions of students with statements of special educational needs, or who need additional help with their learning, are broadly average. The school has specialist mathematics and computing college status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Lawnswood School provides a satisfactory education for its students. There has been an improving trend in results at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and students now make satisfactory progress, reaching standards at the end of each key stage that are broadly in line with national averages. However, the school is determined to improve further so that all students reach their full potential. Most students behave well, but a small minority have poor behaviour and this has a negative effect on progress. Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Attendance is below average overall which also has a negative effect on the progress of some students. The school is aware of this and has detailed strategies in place, but they have not yet had a significant impact.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives so that students know what they are trying to achieve in a session. Effective assessment practices are supporting the improvements in achievement, although are not yet fully embedded in all areas. The curriculum is satisfactory with a wide range of options being developed. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some strong features in this aspect of its work.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There is a clear vision for the school and a strong focus on raising achievement. A number of initiatives have been introduced to support this and their impact can already be seen in the significant improvements at Key Stage 3 but in other areas it is less marked. For example, the use of data has been improved but is not yet consistently applied or improving achievement across all areas. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Accommodation, resources and information and communication technology (ICT) provision have improved greatly, but there is still some way to go with reducing absence and the level of fixed-term exclusion. The school has used the benefits of specialist status well, particularly in developing ICT provision and resources. The school has the capacity to continue to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and value highly the support they get from all of their tutors. Standards are satisfactory and overall students make satisfactory progress. In some subjects, including English literature and art and design, students generally do better than expected when compared with their earlier GCSE results.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Many students are involved in extra-curricular activities, especially sport and charitable events. Attendance is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good: teachers know their subjects well and set challenging targets for students. Students' progress is monitored carefully. A wide range of academic subjects is offered in the sixth form but the choice of vocational options at advanced level is limited. Sixth form students receive good guidance as they make choices about university or future employment. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory: some features of day-to-day management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement further.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve the standard of behaviour of a minority of students.
- Improve consistency in the way assessment is used to support the raising of standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment. In 2005, results at the end of Year 9 were lower than the national average in English, mathematics and science but were significantly better in 2006 and are now broadly average.

In 2005 the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE was significantly below the national average. However, the proportion gaining the higher grades of A* and A was above the national average. Students made good progress in English from Years 7 to 11. In 2006 GCSE results rose markedly. The school's internal tracking, and the written evidence in students' books, shows that students' rates of progress continue to improve although there is variation between subjects. Overall, students in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress in lessons and in their written work. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support and this enables them to keep up with others. Overall students from minority ethnic groups do as well as other students.

In the sixth form, standards are broadly average and students make satisfactory progress overall. Students who take GCE A level subjects make better progress than those who study vocational subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory overall with some aspects that are good. Students are encouraged to eat and drink healthily and to adopt healthy lifestyles. Frequent access to sport and regular exercise is much appreciated by many students all of whom have a 'fitness test' on entry to the school in Year 7. This information is utilised well by the school to highlight particular sporting skills and to enhance students' personal development. Most students say that they like school, even though a significant minority of those spoken to during the inspection had concerns about behaviour. The number and regularity of fixed term exclusions is relatively high.

Students' attendance and punctuality is below average despite the school's detailed monitoring and promotional systems. In addition, a significant minority of students have an attendance rate of below 80% and this has a negative impact on their achievement and progress.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory and regular personal, social and health education lessons help to provide them with an increasing knowledge of their own selves and of the community in which they live. Older students have a good range

of opportunities to sample work experience projects and undertake vocational courses which add positive support and guidance to their future economic well-being.

Students enjoy life in the sixth form and say they feel safe. Enrichment opportunities are varied and students are encouraged to participate. Whole day events covering health issues, drugs and racial awareness are very much appreciated.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school has made much effort in recent years to improve the quality of teaching and, particularly in Key Stage 3, there is evidence of students attaining higher standards and better achievement. There is improving consistency of standards of teaching between subject departments. Lessons are usually well planned and students value the objectives set for their work. Teachers have a good command of their subject and present ideas clearly.

However, weaknesses in attendance hinder some students' progress and in some lessons weak prior knowledge means that learning is not as rapid as it should be. Most students have adequate or better attitudes to learning and behaviour although some do not, particularly when teaching does not engage their interest fully or when work is not matched well to their needs. Effective assessment, tracking and mentoring of students is improving achievement, although there remains some inconsistency in the quality of marking of work.

The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good, but the impact on achievement and standards is reduced by the adequate rather than good attendance of some students. Sixth form students are set challenging targets and their progress is monitored carefully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with a good range of courses for students at Key Stage 3. Recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum allow students to choose from five different pathways, including vocational options such as hairdressing and automotive engineering. An increasing number of students attend local further educational colleges for some of their time to pursue their vocational courses. An alternative curriculum is being developed for disaffected students. However, these developments are recent.

A good range of ICT qualifications have been introduced as a result of the school's specialist mathematics and computing status. All students participate in enterprise activities. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities although attendance at these is patchy.

The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. A good range of academic courses is offered. However, there is a limited range of vocational options available at advanced level to enable students to build on their successes in Key Stage 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory with good features. The school has a wide spectrum of students from differing backgrounds and provides a high quality of pastoral support to vulnerable students and those identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Student accident and medical administration systems are in place, as are risk assessments and other health and safety checks for both the school site and for regular external visits. The systems for monitoring and assessing students' academic progress are improving and students are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. However, the use of varying levels of work for the different abilities of students and the academic guidance needed to ensure students consistently know what to do to improve, is not yet fully embedded across the whole school.

In the sixth form students are well cared for and appreciate the help given to them by their tutors who often go the extra mile to support them. There are good arrangements in place to help sixth formers make informed choices about their future education or employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Senior managers set a clear direction for the school and have ensured it is communicated effectively. The school has developed a new management structure over the last 18 months and put in place a number of new initiatives to support the raising of achievement. While many of these initiatives have yet to have full impact there are signs of improvement, for example the Key Stage 3 results for 2006 showed a marked increase on those of previous years. Strategies put in place to support improvements at Key Stage 4 have yet to have such a marked impact on results for all subjects, although the school's data confirm that students current progress is satisfactory overall.

There is a clear understanding of accountability at all levels and senior and middle managers have an accurate view of the standards and progress of students. The recently introduced assessment, recording and reporting process gathers reliable evidence with rigour and the information produced is being used to support the raising of standards. However, this is in its early stages and not all areas use it as effectively as others. Self-evaluation is detailed and senior leaders have a clear idea of where the major strengths and areas for improvement are.

Governors play an effective role in the management of the school: they know the school well and have appropriate training. They have an effective committee structure and provide appropriate challenge to the leadership team. The specialist status of the school has had many beneficial effects in developing the curriculum, partnership work and in improving resources.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory with good aspects in the day-to-day management by the director of sixth form. The school's evaluation of certain aspects of provision in the sixth form was more generous than the inspectors' judgements. The school identified many of the issues in the sixth form, but not all were given sufficient consideration in the overall judgements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection we made of your school. It was very interesting visiting your lessons and talking with you. We also found the questionnaires completed by your parents helpful.

We think your school is providing you with a satisfactory education and seeking to improve further. The progress you are making and the standards you reach in your studies are improving. You are now making satisfactory progress overall, although for some of you progress is more limited because you do not attend as well as you should. In addition some of you do not behave as well as you should and this also limits progress.

The teaching you receive is satisfactory and you like having clear objectives and explanations from teachers. In the sixth form teaching is good. The range of subjects you are able to study is satisfactory and is being developed to give you a wide choice at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Your personal development and well-being and the care, guidance and support you receive are also satisfactory. You enjoy life in the sixth form where your personal development and well-being are good.

The senior leaders have a vision for the school, what it does well and where it needs to improve. So that your school can improve further, we have asked managers to make sure that all areas use data well to support raising achievement. Achievement, attendance and behaviour also need to improve. You have a role to play here by working with the school to make sure you attend and behave well.

Your school has improved in many ways since the last inspection and with your support can make even better progress in the future.