

# Lansdowne School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100654
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lambeth
<b>Inspection number</b>	323322
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Nolan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	116
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss S Stuart
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs G Bealing
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Argyll Close Dalyell Road London SW9 9QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7737 3713
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7738 6877

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Lansdowne caters for students with a wide range of complex needs. All have a statement of special need. Around half of the students have moderate or severe learning difficulties. The others have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. The majority of students face challenges with language development and communications. Most students come from the local area, which is socially and culturally very diverse. This mix is reflected in the school community. A third of the students are at the early stages of learning English. Most are eligible for free school meals and many are vulnerable young people, already known to the social services. Boys outnumber girls in all year groups.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Lansdowne is a good school that provides well for its vulnerable students. Parents greatly appreciate the school's work. One commented that 'My son enjoys every day in school.' Another wrote 'I cannot thank the school enough. My daughter has done so well'. These views are typical of those parents who returned questionnaires.

The school provides very effective personal care, guidance and support for its students. This, together with an excellent curriculum that is individualised to suit the needs of individuals, underpins students' good overall progress. Students find access to the wide range of therapies particularly helpful. Although standards remain well below average, from very low starting points, students of all ages and across all groups achieve well, especially in their personal targets and in their communication skills. By Year 11, all students gain external accreditation in basic skills and many have already acquired real-life practical skills through their work-based learning.

Students' spiritual, moral cultural and social development is good. Most students have a genuine sense of right from wrong as a result of the personal and social training they receive. Students generally behave satisfactorily in class because of the very good support from teaching assistants and this supports their learning. They actually begin to believe, many for the first time, that they can succeed. Occasionally, however, despite knowing the impact of their actions on others, some choose to disrupt. All staff deal very well with such incidents, keeping a careful balance between individual needs and those of the group. Students share their varied traditions and cultures with each other through well-orchestrated celebrations of religious festivals. The strong emphasis on safety and independence in the curriculum enables students to get to know others with different backgrounds in a secure, well-managed environment. They enjoy the daily assemblies and participate sensibly in the time for reflection.

Although some students still miss too much school unnecessarily, most attend Lansdowne more regularly than their previous schools. This is because they feel they matter and are happy with smaller numbers around them. They even admit to enjoying school and the rich opportunities for clubs and activities. They participate well in organised games but are more reluctant to follow well-understood healthy eating guidelines. They are very proud of their many certificates for fund raising for charities both at home and overseas and of their parts in the school musicals. Their success in their work placements alongside their gains in reading and other basic skills prepares them well for the next stage of training or working life.

Since the last inspection, good leadership and management have very successfully developed classroom practice so that teaching and learning are predominantly good. Students learn well because teachers plan imaginative tasks that hold their interest. This has involved much training for staff because of the changing nature of the school population. Staff are working together to develop existing systems to assess students' academic progress further but checks need to be more frequent, rigorous, and recorded regularly. Senior leaders also accept that middle managers do not all have the skills to monitor their areas of responsibility fully effectively. The school's partnership with parents is strong as are its links with local support agencies. It is very active in seeking ways to involve hard-to-reach families.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that checks on students' learning are frequent and regular and contribute to the school's overview of how well they are doing.

- Develop the capacity of middle leaders so that they can confidently monitor and evaluate the work of their subject areas.
- Intensify efforts to promote regular attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards remain well below average but the achievement of students from all backgrounds is good. Records show that when students join Lansdowne their starting points are very much lower than those typical for their ages. Many students face learning challenges because of complex medical conditions. Others have experienced disruption to their earlier education because of behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.

Students make fast progress towards their personal, behavioural and social targets and, consequently, their progress in basic skills accelerates as they move through the school. All students gain entry-level certificates in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) by the end of Year 11. Students make particularly fast progress in entry-level French courses, many gaining the highest levels available. They also successfully complete awards in the humanities, physical education, life skills and Young Enterprise. A very small number of Year 9 students take part in the national tests and make their best progress in mathematics and science, a few almost reaching average levels. Those students who experience communication difficulties generally make good gains in reading, between Year 7 and Year 11. The school's records of students' progress indicate convincingly that the school is effective in ensuring that all groups make equally good progress, including those with severe learning difficulties, by the end of Year 11.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Lansdowne rightly evaluates that its students make exceptional progress in their personal development. Students know that the adults around them genuinely care for them and they form happy and trusting relationships. Students' satisfactory behaviour and understanding of how to keep safe represent giant strides from their starting points. Above all, students value the small-school environment that allows them to form real friendships and 'bond with each other'. Most students' attendance also shows improvement as they settle into Lansdowne although some still unnecessarily miss too much of their education. Students enjoy their participation in physical activities and know about healthy eating. However, they are disinclined to follow the good advice from the school and many resist the healthy meals provided.

Students' contributions to the school and wider community are excellent. As far as they can, they help others by carrying out a range of simple tasks responsibly, including recycling. They frequently raise funds for charities at home and abroad, often through imaginative projects. These activities support students in learning life skills as does participation in the work-related programme. Students prepare well for their college placements through very careful transition arrangements.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The school has an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Warm working relationships and purposeful individualised support allow students to make steady progress and grow confident in learning. The management of students' behaviour by both teachers and support assistants is excellent. Interesting tasks such as those for Year 8 in a design and technology lesson engaged students' interest well so that they worked collaboratively with the staff and used equipment responsibly. Other students with complex needs thoroughly enjoyed number recognition through a group dice game. Classroom environments are stimulating and exciting places to be and many teachers use signing well to aid communication for students. Nevertheless, some teaching uses too few visual and practical resources to help students make connections between words and ideas. Feedback to students on how to improve their work is also too variable across subjects.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

There has been excellent progress in developing the curriculum since the last inspection. The rich range of activities both within and outside of the school day contributes greatly to the students' enjoyment of school. Singing, key boards, African drums and cooking are all favourites, as are sports clubs. The annual musical is an excellent showcase for the students' many talents and engages both staff and students in teamwork and problem solving. A real strength is the way the school personalises its provision for students. The Lansdowne curriculum parallels the mainstream curriculum to ensure that students have access to every opportunity for development. Additionally, however, students benefit from a range of therapies, including art, and from well-considered work experience placements on a weekly basis. There is a strong focus on safety and on independence, particularly in travel, running through all activities.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding students are exceptionally robust and risk assessments are in place for all. Lansdowne goes that extra mile in preparing students for their next steps, sometimes keeping those not fully ready to manage a college environment for extra weeks in school to help them mature. Personal guidance for students is outstanding as are the links with outside agencies. The school lays great store in supporting families as well as individual students, encouraging all to pull together for the benefit of the young person.

Since the last inspection, the school's assessment practice has improved. An annual record of students' academic progress across the curriculum now complements the statutory reviews. However, other interim procedures to check how well students are achieving are left to individual teachers and subjects and are not co-ordinated into a whole-school overview. The school recognises that both middle leaders and senior staff do not have a frequent enough overview of students' academic progress as they go through the school year.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The dedicated and skilful leadership of the headteacher, very well supported by the deputy headteacher, is reflected in the shared vision and common sense of purpose among all staff. They demonstrate daily the school's motto of 'achieving together.' This collaborative working underpins the school's good capacity to improve further.

The profile of the school's intake has changed significantly since the last inspection. The senior team has been tireless in seeking to provide all students with effective opportunities to flourish, both personally and academically. At the same time, they have ensured that teachers and support assistants have received the training they need to deal with new challenges. Senior staff has a generally accurate grasp of the school's strengths and know where it needs to do better. They recognise that checks on students' progress need to be better managed and that middle managers do not all have the skills to manage their areas of responsibility effectively.

Lansdowne is a very harmonious community. The school ensures that all cultures and traditions are respected and celebrated. It also does much to support parents and carers in looking after the students. Cookery classes, for example, are open to foster carers so that they can learn how to make the traditional dishes of the many ethnic groups represented by the students. There are strong links with local residents' groups, often facilitated through governors. The school is rightly proud of its success in maintaining an inclusive ethos where all groups of students make good progress.

Governance is good. Governors support the school well and are very active in promoting the strategic development of the school within the local authority plan. With the guidance of an able chair, they are now able to challenge the school effectively when they need to. There is a strong partnership with external support agencies and with the students' families. This excellent support encourages the families to feel that they, too, belong to the school.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Lansdowne School, London, SW9 9QL

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly to Lansdowne. I very much enjoyed sharing time with you and seeing how much most of you like coming to school. I know that you and your parents appreciate greatly how well staff look after you.

I also know that you agree with me that Lansdowne is a good school. Your parents certainly think so. Many of you really appreciate the small numbers in your classes and the opportunity to make friends with both fellow students and staff. You are learning well because of the high levels of support you receive, not only from the senior and teaching staff, but also from the teaching assistants. Because of this many of you make up earlier missed opportunities and learn to read efficiently. Many of you also really appreciate how the support staff assists you to behave as you know you should.

Most of you have improved your attendance since joining Lansdowne. However, some of you could make a greater effort to attend more regularly. All staff are working tirelessly on your behalf to ensure you get the best education the school can provide.

Before I left Lansdowne, I talked to your teachers about how it could be even better. They told me that they would make more regular checks on how well you are learning. I also asked that the school help subject leaders to develop even better skills so that they can oversee your learning more effectively.

I hope you will continue to cooperate with the staff so that you learn as well as you possibly can. I am also sure that you will continue your efforts to raise money for charities and add to that impressive wall display. More of you could also try the healthy meals that the school prepares for you every day.

I wish you and your school every success for the future, especially for the new musical production.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector