

Laurence Jackson School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111724
Local Authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	325444
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Georgiana Sale

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1495
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gwynne Smith
Headteacher	Mr Tony Gavin
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Church Lane Guisborough TS14 6RD
Telephone number	01287 636361
Fax number	01287 610309

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector seconded to Ofsted and four other Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Laurence Jackson is a larger than average comprehensive school. It serves the relatively affluent small market town of Guisborough and surrounding villages across a wide geographical area. The school has specialist sports status. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is below average, but there are pockets of social deprivation. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who have English as an additional language, is very small. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. A new headteacher took up post in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Laurence Jackson School provides a satisfactory education and students achieve satisfactorily. The school is improving rapidly as a result of the vision and drive of the headteacher, and this is recognised by staff, students, parents, the governing body, the local authority (LA) and the school improvement partner (SIP). The improvement in standards in 2008, reflected in the school's provisional test results, shows the school is overcoming previous underachievement.

Since the last inspection the quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now good. Recently the curriculum has been enhanced by a wider range of courses, and a better tracking system has been introduced that enables staff to check on students' progress and identify any underachievement. All students have challenging targets as well as frequent assessments and their progress is reviewed regularly with their parents. While there is some good practice in teachers' marking to indicate what students need to do to improve, this is not consistent across subjects.

Students, parents and staff say that there is now a more positive atmosphere for learning, students' behaviour is better, and although a small amount of poorer behaviour remains, it is tackled more promptly and effectively.

Students make satisfactory progress and by the time they leave, reach above average standards. In 2008 the school's provisional results at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 showed an improvement on the previous year. Standards, as seen in the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs were above the national average but were only 1% above those reached in 2005. GCSE results have also improved in English and mathematics. However, given the students' above average starting points the standards reached in these subjects represent only satisfactory achievement.

The students enjoy school. They work in a safe and caring environment where they feel well supported by staff and know the 'Student Voice' is listened to. The school offers them good opportunities to learn about and take up a healthy lifestyle through the personal social and health education curriculum and sport related activities. The curriculum is also enhanced by good opportunities which help to prepare students for the world of work. The school's re-designation as a specialist sports college in 2007 has added to the momentum for change. The specialism is being used effectively to support the drive to raise standards and to improve teaching and learning. It is also providing enhanced resources for the school and the local community.

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory and improving. With effective support from key senior staff, the headteacher is providing good leadership. As a result, the school's evaluation of its effectiveness has improved and effective systems have been introduced to monitor the performance of the school and increase accountability at all levels. Middle leaders have developed a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their leadership capacity is strengthening. However, leadership and management at this level are only satisfactory and at senior level there is not enough strength in depth across the full team.

The strong leadership of the headteacher is enabling the school to tackle the legacy of underperformance. Among the staff there is a strong sense of unity and a commitment to improvement. Teamwork has strengthened. The improvements in standards in the last year, the growing leadership capacity, and the recognition by staff and students that further work needs to be done demonstrate that there is good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English and mathematics for students at all levels of ability
- Embed and further develop the role of middle leaders so that they all make a positive impact on standards and progress so they make a stronger contribution to the drive for improvement.
- Ensure a consistent approach to the marking of students' work between subjects to raise achievement and share good practice

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students start in Year 7 with standards which are above average. The majority make satisfactory progress in their learning and by the end of Year 11 reach above average standards. Given students' starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement. Provisional results for 2008 show clear signs of improvement. The proportion of students achieving five or more good passes at GCSE is greater than seen nationally and shows an upward trend over the past three years. However, when the proportion of students obtaining five good passes including English and mathematics GCSE is taken into account, standards are broadly in line with national averages. The number of students obtaining 5 A* to G grades has remained high over the past four years and in 2008 all students gained at least one GCSE pass.

In 2007, standards at Key Stage 3 were above average. While the school's unvalidated results for 2008 show an improving picture in English and science, standards slipped in mathematics.

Differences in students' performance between subjects are especially noticeable at the highest grades in GCSE. Students did especially well in art, drama, French and physical education, but the proportions reaching the highest standards were below average in English, design and technology and history. Higher attaining boys in particular did less well than girls.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they benefit from very effective support and from opportunities to follow vocational courses which are carefully chosen to help them achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The students enjoy school, helping to create the positive learning atmosphere observed in most classrooms. They have good moral and social awareness as evidenced by the good behaviour of the vast majority in lessons and around the school. Students say that the contributions of the newly appointed student managers and the rewards system, driven by the Sports College leader, have resulted in improvements to behaviour and attendance which is slightly above the national average. Students contribute to the life of their local area, and gain enterprise and workplace skills, but say that they have few opportunities to work with young people from other ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Students say that they feel safe and that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. The students have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and take full advantage of the wide range of sporting activities offered in and out of school hours.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The inspection team agrees with the school's evaluation that teaching and learning are good. The majority of teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. In a few lessons however, the pace of learning is too slow and this limits the progress that students make. More able students in particular are not challenged enough.

Teachers plan lessons carefully and are beginning to address the needs of individual students, providing a good range of interesting activities. The school has invested well in information and communication technology (ICT) and where teachers use ICT effectively it adds pace and interest to the lessons and enhances the students' enjoyment of learning.

The majority of classes are managed effectively and students' good behaviour enables them to learn well. In a few classes low level disruption on the part of a small number of students affects the learning of all. Students work independently as well as in pairs and groups and say that they enjoy lessons, particularly where a variety of learning methods are used.

In the best lessons the teachers match effective questioning to students' different learning needs. Their marking provides students with accurate feedback about how to improve and tasks are tailored to the requirements of individual students. These factors combine to enable all students to make good progress.

There are some good examples of effective marking where students are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. Nevertheless, the quality of marking is variable across subjects and does not consistently guide students to reach the next level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum meets national requirements and contributes well to students' personal development and well-being. Students benefit considerably from the school's status as a sports college. The school makes good use of the leadership and subject expertise afforded by its specialist status to enrich the curriculum. These resources and wider opportunities for study have a positive impact on students' accomplishments in physical education and sport and in their personal development and well-being.

Since the previous inspection the provision has improved for lower attainers and those at risk of disaffection. There is now a good range of alternative courses which are accredited for these students. For the most part students succeed on these courses. From their starting points, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well. This is due to a wide range of curriculum options designed to meet their individual needs and the good levels of care and support they receive from the learning support team. From the beginning of this term the school has had a renewed focus on the promotion and use of literacy skills. This is helping students to develop skills that will support their progress in all subject areas and in their life beyond school.

Older students can choose from a range of academic and vocational courses and use is made of local providers to extend the options on offer. The curriculum offers opportunities for lower attainers to develop their basic skills in English and mathematics and the more able students are able to take two foreign languages and separate sciences. Students also benefit from a rich

programme of extra curricular activities in sports and the arts as well as the chance to study additional subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. All required checks and procedures are in place to safeguard the students' health and well-being. Good pastoral and social education supports the students' personal development well and helps them when they start school, when making their option choices and when they leave. For example, in Year 7 there is a good emphasis on teamwork and 'Learning to Learn' skills. Year 9 students have individual interviews with a senior member of staff which effectively supports them when choosing options for Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4 skills for employment are developed progressively, through the 'Lifeskills' programme. Additionally, students in Year 10 have a work experience placement and gain good experience of applying for jobs and mock interviews through the imaginative involvement of members of the local business community. Employment advisors and well attended careers information evenings successfully support Year 11 students through post 16 choices.

The school is developing a comprehensive, academic tutoring programme which is based on whole-school assessment procedures. The performance of individual students is now tracked systematically and encouraged through rewards, interventions and mentoring. However, the quality of guidance given to students through the marking of their work is inconsistent.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with behavioural difficulties, make good progress in meeting their personal targets as a result of effective support in class from teaching assistants and the involvement of specialist external agencies. Students with autism benefit from the specialist resource centre which enables them to access mainstream classes as appropriate to their needs

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has set clear strategic direction for the school with learning and high standards at its heart. Supported by key senior staff, his vision has been communicated successfully to the whole school community.

Although there are pockets of strong, effective practice in leadership and management, the drive and capacity for improvement are not equally shared or embedded at all levels of management. Middle management is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the capacity for leadership is increasing. Through training and coaching, subject leaders are developing an understanding of their role. Additionally a wider range of staff are being brought into an extended leadership team.

Improved systems, policies and procedures are inconsistently used across the school and have not all had sufficient time to show impact. For example, while the school records students' achievement and attainment in detail, the level of analysis of the data varies and is not used with sufficient rigour to direct and inform future actions in all subject departments.

Governance is good; the governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are increasingly holding the staff to account. The school, especially through

the sporting links, acts successfully as a hub for the local community making a positive contribution to local community cohesion. The school promotes good relationships in all parts of its own community and makes sure that all students are included in the learning community of the school.

The improvements in standards and provision in the last year, the growing strength of key leaders and the developing confidence of middle managers give the school good capacity to improve further.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 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?	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	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**

8 December 2008
8 December 2008 the inspection.

Dear Students

Inspection of Laurence Jackson School, Redcar and Cleveland, TS14 6RD.

As you are aware, four colleagues and I recently spent two days inspecting your school, and I am writing to let you know the judgements we have made.

The inspection found that yours is a satisfactory and improving school. Your progress has been satisfactory but is also improving. You are set challenging targets and examination results are rising. This year, seven out of ten students left with five good GCSE passes and all students achieved at least one GCSE pass..

Your behaviour in lessons and around the school was good. You have good attitudes to your learning. We thought that the range of courses that you choose from in Year 10 is good and helps all of you succeed in examinations.

You told us how much you enjoy the range of sporting and other activities. Your teachers and other staff give good support; relationships are strong and you told us that you always feel there is someone you can talk to about any problem. Your parents and you told us what a positive effect the headteacher has had, and we agree. He and all the staff are working hard to make the school a better place and they have a good understanding of where further improvements can be made. To help we have asked them to:

Raise standards in English and mathematics.

Ensure all those in middle leadership positions have the skills they need to drive improvements in their respective areas of responsibility.

Ensure that when marking your work the teachers give you regular feedback on how to improve and reach the next level.

I am sure that you can think of ways to support Mr Gavin and the staff to improve in these areas. Thank you again for helping us and wish you every success in the future.

Georgiana Sale

Lead inspector