

Longcroft School and Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118073
Local Authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	326758
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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 (total)	1452
Sixth form	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Wigley
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	Burton Road Beverley HU17 7EJ
Telephone number	01482 862171
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Longcroft School and Performing Arts College is a large, split-site comprehensive school. The community it serves does not have the extremes of social and economic deprivation, apart from one disadvantaged area. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is that of students eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. The work the school does in expressive arts is exciting and challenging for many students. They benefit enormously from such opportunities in terms of their personal development and a sense of achievement and enjoyment. These are experiences which are likely to be remembered for the rest of their lives.

Students' progress and their achievement in relation to their average starting points when they joined the school are satisfactory. Standards overall are similar to those seen nationally. There is, however, a marked variation in standards between different subjects. Students attain highly in information and communication technology and they use this skill well in all their subjects. The 2008 results in food technology, resistant materials, dance and Spanish, for example, were well above expectations. Results in geography, German and statistics, however, were significantly below average. Students' basic skills of literacy and numeracy are average and they are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They say they feel safe in school, enjoy their work, take plenty of exercise and eat healthily. Many take on responsibilities helping younger students or working with pupils in local primary schools. They therefore make a good contribution to the harmony of their own and the local community. A relatively small proportion of families sent in a completed parental questionnaire. A significant number of those who made the return expressed concerns about students' behaviour and the impact of teacher absences on students' learning. The inspection found that the behaviour of most students is good, although there are a few who sometimes misbehave in some lessons and this can slow the progress of others.

Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory and in the best lessons the planning is thorough and based on a sound understanding of students' needs. The work is then challenging and enjoyable and students leave the classroom with a sense of work completed and done well. There is, however, variation in the quality of teaching and learning. In the less effective lessons teachers are not using accurate assessments of students' progress to plan the next stages in their learning. Students are not always clear about the progress they are making from week-to-week because marking is variable in quality. Students know the examination levels or grades they are aiming for but many have little guidance in lessons on what they have to do to improve. Students who are vulnerable in any way, those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same progress as others in their academic and personal development. The curriculum is good, as are the care and support afforded to all students.

Leaders, managers and governors work hard and are committed to students' welfare. They can point to notable achievements in the work done now and in the recent past. In 2006, for example, academic standards were well above average and students' progress and achievement were excellent. There are students now who are entered early for GCSE examinations and do well. Cultural and sporting achievements are impressive. However, monitoring of student performance is variable across subjects, so appropriate action is not always in place to raise standards where required. Academic progress remains at a satisfactory level for many students, however, because some leaders and managers are not monitoring and evaluating progress with sufficient rigour. Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The school is well-resourced and recent staffing difficulties in mathematics, science and technology have been resolved.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Curriculum provision is good. Although it is mainly directed at those students who wish to pursue broadly academic courses, a range of performing arts subjects is offered. Students achieve well in these subjects, for example, in theatre studies, dance and music technology. They also attain high standards in law. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is slightly below average. This is because the school's open admissions policy provides opportunities for a wide range of students, some of whom have relatively modest attainment at GCSE. The 2008 results in the advanced supplementary examinations at the end of Year 12 were average and showed that students had made good progress. Most students continued with their studies into Year 13, attaining at least average, and in many cases above average results in the A level examinations. Achievement was good and students were able to fulfill their higher education or career ambitions.

Sixth form provision is very well led and managed which results in students developing well personally as well as academically. Teaching and learning are good because students are encouraged to work independently and learning assignments are challenging and enjoyable. The sixth form leader monitors teaching rigorously and has identified that opportunities for discussion are too limited in some lessons. Measures are in place to address this. Students' care, support and guidance are good overall. The academic guidance students receive is excellent because their work is closely monitored; they have clear targets for improvement and receive timely advice and support on how to improve. Students have positive attitudes to learning and work hard to succeed. They participate enthusiastically in the varied opportunities to enrich their studies and undertake responsibilities to help and support younger students and pupils in the local primary schools. Overall, students grow in confidence as they move through the sixth form and feel strongly that their views matter and are given full consideration by the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- In main school, develop the ability of leaders and managers at all levels to evaluate performance rigorously and take appropriate action to raise standards.
- Ensure students in main school know how well they are progressing in lessons and understand what they need to do to improve.
- Use ongoing assessments more effectively to inform lesson planning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average by the time students leave school. Students' progress and their achievement in relation to their average starting points at the beginning of Year 7 are satisfactory. This judgement is the same as the school's evaluation of the academic achievement of students by the time they are 16. In 2008, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was average. This was a dip compared with the results obtained in the previous year. The school's performance targets were missed. A significant gap remains in the relative performance of subjects at GCSE, an issue

remaining from the previous inspection. Standards in English and mathematics, for example, have yet to match the well above average attainment of students in art and design and French. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2008 were above average and similar to those attained in 2007. Year 9 students' progress was good. The school's assessments show that Year 11 students' current progress in some subjects has improved because of appropriate and extensive support and that they are well placed to exceed national expectations in the summer examinations. Such good progress is not seen in all subjects and inspection evidence shows that, in general, students' progress remains satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, are good. They have a keen sense of fair play and know right from wrong. They are sensitive to the needs of others. Students say they feel safe and that incidents of bullying or racism are rare and are promptly and effectively dealt with when they do occur. The behaviour of most students is good but in a few lessons a minority of students find difficulty adjusting to school discipline. Students and parents say that this poor behaviour slows the pace of learning for others. Discussions with students revealed that they enjoy their work and are proud of their school. Attendance is above average. Students understand how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and improve the quality of their diet and the amount of exercise they take. Many students take advantage of the opportunities to make a contribution to the local community. These have been extended considerably as a result of the school's status as a performing arts college. Some also take on responsibilities enthusiastically in school, for example, by serving on the school council. Students are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While the school evaluates teaching and learning as good, inspectors judge them to be satisfactory. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching. In the best lessons, planning is thorough and based on a good knowledge of students' needs. Explanations are clear, expectations high and learning brisk. Skilful questioning helps students to improve their understanding. Tasks, which closely match the learning objectives, are varied and interesting and engage students. As a result, students enjoy the lesson and make rapid progress. For example, in one science lesson, practical experiments on using magnets so enthused the students that one exclaimed to the teacher, 'Sir, this is mint'. In good lessons, there is effective use of information and communication technology to promote learning. However, in too many lessons teaching and learning are no better than satisfactory because planning does not take enough account of ongoing assessment and students' differing needs. Some teachers do not give students sufficient opportunity to improve their learning through discussion or to engage in active self-evaluation of their own work and that of others. Activities are sometimes mundane, lack challenge and are too prolonged. As a result, students lose interest.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has developed since the last inspection and is now good. Different pathways are offered at Key Stage 3 and this gives students flexibility to follow a curriculum appropriate to their needs. More able students can access programmes which accelerate progress and lead to early entry for GCSE examinations. They obtain well above average and, in many cases, outstanding results. At Key Stage 4, there is a wider range of vocational opportunities, including courses provided in partnership with external providers. The learning support team operates effectively to enhance provision for vulnerable students and they make progress in line with their fellow students. There are more opportunities for the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum, an improvement since the previous inspection. The school has the extension of work related learning opportunities across the curriculum as a priority for development. The specialist performing arts status has resulted in a wide range of arts related courses offered to students which do much to broaden and enrich their education. Students respond well to this provision and achieve high standards in many of these specialist subject areas. There is a wide range of popular enrichment and extra curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the school's work is satisfactory. The school evaluates it as good but the inspection found that the academic guidance students receive is satisfactory. Pastoral care for all students and the support given to vulnerable students are good. Members of staff are consistently caring and know their students well. Safeguarding and child protection procedures meet national requirements.

Marking is variable between teachers and across the range of subjects. Students know the levels or grades they should aim for in examinations but there is inadequate use of improvements targets and recorded advice to guide them on their way. There are satisfactory systems in place to evaluate the relative performance of different groups and individuals. This results in students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language making satisfactory progress in their work. The school's provision and its effective partnerships with a range of outside agencies enable vulnerable students to progress in line with their peers. Strong links with career agencies and an informative careers guidance programme results in the vast majority of Year 11 leavers entering further education or education with training.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory, a judgement in line with the school's own evaluation. Senior leaders have been innovative in broadening opportunities for students to work creatively, particularly in the expressive arts and in collaboration with primary school pupils. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. There is good involvement in the local and wider community and students play their part in working for harmony in school and in helping others. Students have a good understanding of society's cultural and religious diversity. The school is a place where vulnerable or disadvantaged students have the same opportunities as others. There are students who perform highly in public examinations and excel themselves in their sporting and cultural activities. Self-evaluation, however, is not accurate

in the areas of teaching, learning and academic guidance. This is because the monitoring and evaluation of performance in some areas is not rigorous. There is variation in the effectiveness of subject leaders to secure improvement and raise the tempo of students' progress from satisfactory to good. Governors are supportive of the school and are closely involved in its day-to-day life. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection in the use of information and communication technology for teaching and learning. The school has succeeded in improving its results in several curriculum areas resulting in excellent achievement in those subjects. Its capacity to continue to improve is therefore good.

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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	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	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	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	

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

13 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Longcroft School and Performing Arts College, East Riding of Yorkshire, HU17 7EJ

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We very much appreciated your contributions to our discussions and the opportunity to see you at work. We particularly want to thank those of you who gave up part of the lunch break to talk to us.

Longcroft provides you with a satisfactory quality of education and there are aspects of its work which are good. The specialist status for performing arts has provided a wide range of opportunities for many students to excel creatively and in their personal development, which is good. We were impressed with the range of well attended extra-curricular activities on offer. Many of you achieve well and reach above average standards. The good relationships between you and the adults in the school add to your enjoyment for your education. You are polite and your behaviour is generally good. We were impressed with older students helping the younger students and particularly with the work that they undertake in the primary schools. Achievement in the sixth form is good because it is well led, teaching is challenging and learning enjoyable.

We think that the academic achievement of many students in main school, although satisfactory, should be better. To help with this, we have asked your teachers to make sure that they provide clearer guidance about how to accelerate the progress that individual students make. We want them to make clear in their marking how well you are doing and what you have to do to improve to reach your targets in test and examinations. We have also asked that the senior and middle leaders analyse and interpret your performance rigorously and that teachers use assessments more effectively to provide challenging work which meets the needs of all students. In doing so, they can make sure that all of you make good progress.

You can help support the school by continuing to work hard independently and in collaboration with each other.

We wish all the very best for the future.

Brian Dower

Lead inspector