

Lyndon School Humanities College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104114
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323969
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	1296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Professor Derek Sheldon
Headteacher	Mrs Selina Westwood
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 January 2006
School address	Daylesford Road Solihull West Midlands B92 8EJ
Telephone number	0121 743 3402
Fax number	0121 743 6138

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large, over-subscribed secondary school. Students come from 38 primary feeder schools, with around half travelling in from the neighbouring local authority of Birmingham. There is a slightly higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most schools. While a higher proportion of students speak English as an additional language than in most schools, none is at an early stage of learning English. A higher-than-average proportion of students have statements of special educational need, with 13 hearing impaired students accessing the support of a local authority managed hearing impaired centre on the school site.

The school became a specialist humanities college in September 2006, with English, drama and citizenship as its specialist subjects. It has received a number of awards in recent years including Investor in People, the National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark, the Extended Healthy Schools award, and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lyndon is a good school, in which students take a good deal of pride. Students take on responsibilities willingly, and play an active role in the school and wider community. A mark of their enjoyment is their excellent attendance, which is consistently above average. They develop effective team-working and leadership skills, which, alongside the good development of their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, ensure that they are well prepared for later life.

Students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well taught and make good progress. Overall standards by the end of Year 11 have been average for some years, but there have been good improvements in standards in mathematics and English. In the key measure of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, inclusive of English and mathematics, standards have risen sharply over four years. In the 2008 examinations, students made very good progress to achieve results that were above average on this measure. This reflects the emphasis the school has given to improving the key skills students need to improve their life chances. Standards in ICT are above average, and students have very good access to computers to help them learn.

Lessons are generally well planned by teachers, and students are mostly given clear objectives for their learning. The quality of pastoral care is high, and students feel safe. The quality of academic guidance varies. There is some exemplary practice in setting students challenging targets and showing them how they can work to meet those targets. However, in a minority of subjects, targets are not reviewed regularly enough, and marking does not show students what they need to do to improve. These inconsistencies are linked to the variable quality of subject leadership in carrying through whole-school policies on marking, target setting, and the use of assessment information. This has been responsible for marked differences in performance between subjects, although these differences are now fewer than they were a year ago as the quality of subject leadership has generally improved.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher and senior team give the school clear direction. They have very effectively addressed the key issues highlighted in the last inspection, particularly in improving students' behaviour and raising standards in mathematics. In doing so, they have demonstrated good capacity to improve. The school evaluates its performance rigorously, so that it has a very clear understanding of how it can go forward. Governance is excellent, and makes a strong contribution to strategic decisions and the management of scarce resources.

The school's specialist status has made a strong impact in improving provision in the specialist subjects, and in stimulating the wide involvement of students in a rich and varied programme of activities, including drama and poetry events. It has contributed to the excellent promotion of community cohesion in the school by promoting students' involvement and interest in the school, local and global communities. Excellent partnerships with other organisations support students' learning and welfare. A good curriculum gives wider and more appropriate choices

for students by offering a broader range of academic, applied and vocational pathways from age 14.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all subject leaders implement whole-school policies with consistent effect, particularly on the use of assessment information and targets.
- Ensure that, in all subjects, marking and other feedback give consistently clear guidance to students on how they can improve the quality of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the school in Year 7 with standards which are broadly average, although fewer than average reached higher levels of attainment in their primary schools. By the end of Year 11, overall standards, in terms of students' total GCSE examination results, have remained broadly average for some years. However, the school has focused much effort on improving performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and ICT since the last inspection. Standards in these key subjects have risen successfully at both Key Stages 3 and 4, and are above average. Students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make strong progress in these core subjects and achievement is good overall. Standards in the school's specialist subjects of English and drama continue to improve and, while not quite reaching their challenging targets, GCSE results are above average. In citizenship, the school's first GCSE results fell a little below target with students not performing as well as in the other specialist subjects. However, inspection observation showed students to be making good progress in citizenship lessons. Examination results have varied considerably between subjects over time and while the gaps have now been closed for most subjects, standards in a small minority of subjects, including science, still lag behind.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Many students participate in sporting activities after school and demonstrate that they understand how to live a healthy lifestyle. They participate well in the life of the school and contribute to the life of the wider community in a variety of ways, for example by taking on responsibility for running events in school, supporting their peers as prefects and working with younger children in local primary schools. They demonstrate their good spiritual and social development through their response to challenging subject matter in assemblies and lessons and through their positive, confident and supportive interactions with their friends, peers and adults. 'The school celebrates cultural diversity' said one student, reflecting the views of others, and pointing to work done by students and staff to develop, for example, multi-faith approaches to assemblies.

Students feel safe at the school. Through the very effective monitoring systems that have been implemented, behaviour has improved. It is generally good both in lessons and around the school, except where the pace of lessons is slow and some low-level disruption occurs. The school has worked hard to ensure that the 'student

voice' is heard on a wide range of development issues and some subjects use students' views well to inform the planning of their curriculum. Students know how to make their views known and the school council has been effective in initiating many improvements. Students tend to respond well to opportunities to work independently and they demonstrate good understanding of their previous learning at these times.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, students enjoy their learning and behave very well in lessons. Relationships are positive between staff and students. Students work well together in the many opportunities they are given to work collaboratively. The majority of lessons are characterised by thorough planning, clear objectives and activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities. This results in generally high levels of engagement and students being challenged in their learning. Learning support assistants work very effectively with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with profound hearing impairments, to ensure that they get full access to the curriculum and make good progress. The school's specialism in humanities has improved the quality of teaching and learning through raising expectations of what students can achieve and by providing increased opportunities for staff to work together to plan the learning experiences. However, the quality of written feedback on students' work through marking is inconsistent, and does not always show them how to improve. A small minority of parents are concerned about the lack of regularity in setting homework. Inspectors agree that the setting of homework is not consistent enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum promotes achievement well because it builds effectively on earlier learning experiences. A recent review has improved the curriculum, making it more flexible and responsive to the needs of the students. Three clear pathways are now available to students at Key Stage 4 involving a full range of academic and vocational qualifications. The school is one of the first to offer a Diploma qualification in ICT, and the course is well subscribed in its first year. In running the Diploma, the school is operating with partner schools and businesses to put on joint events and to offer an appropriate vocational dimension to students' experiences. Further strong partnerships exist with local colleges, which successfully enhance provision, raise students' aspirations and provide clear progression routes to the next stages of education. The school's specialism has enriched the curriculum by increasing learning opportunities in and outside of school, such as a writing weekend in Dublin for gifted and talented students, an annual link with a community poet and student poet laureates. The impressive range of enrichment opportunities, including in sport and drama, promote high participation rates from the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and support provided to students is a strength of the school. There are very effective systems in place for identifying and tracking students who are in need of support, particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who experience behaviour difficulties and those whose attendance gives cause for concern. However, the quality of academic guidance varies between subjects, and in some cases students' targets are not reviewed regularly enough to ensure that they are always sufficiently challenging.

The school is very much focused on inclusion. The effectiveness of this is demonstrated through the routine integration of hearing-impaired students into mainstream classes, where they make good progress. Provision such as the student support centre and the highly effective link with a dedicated West Midlands Police Officer have been instrumental in improving behaviour, attitudes and progress, and are highly valued by both students and staff. Parents are particularly pleased about the transition arrangements for students joining the school in Year 7 from primary schools. Similarly, the school makes effective provision for work-based learning and the transition from school to further education and/or employment. Requirements for safeguarding the welfare of children are fully met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior team have given the school good direction in improving provision and in addressing the key issues of the last inspection. Their success is grounded in rigorous self-evaluation, which directly involves staff at all levels in appraising the work of the school. The views of students and parents are also taken into account through regular and comprehensive surveys. This detailed evaluation of its work has successfully enabled the school to shape its key priorities for development. Notable successes have been achieved in raising standards in English, mathematics and ICT, in improving students' behaviour, and in broadening the curriculum on offer to ensure that courses are well suited to the needs of the students. The school's specialist status has been well managed to raise standards in the specialist subjects and to bring benefits to the wider community. School performance is evaluated against challenging targets and appropriate questions asked if those targets are not reached. However, despite gaps in performance between subjects narrowing overall, achievement in some subjects, including science and religious education, is still significantly lower than in others. In these subjects, leadership is not as effective in carrying through whole-school policies on target setting, marking and the use of assessment information. Governors provide excellent scrutiny of the school's work. They are active, informed and involved, with a clear vision for the future based on the realities and needs of the community. Together with staff, they have ensured that, in spite of funding constraints and tired old buildings that continually drain resources, teaching and learning take place in a well-resourced and stimulating environment.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. It prides itself in involvement at all levels with partners from further education, industry, local faith communities, feeder primary schools, the police, support agencies and those that use the site. Students make an excellent contribution to the school and local community,

and look to take their place in the global community in ways such as providing resources for a school in Kenya.

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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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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.

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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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

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?	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	1
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



12 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Lyndon School Humanities College, Solihull, B92 8EJ

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to my colleagues and me when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We much enjoyed talking to you, and seeing your involvement both in and out of lessons. We were struck by how relaxed and confident you are in talking to adult visitors. Such confidence reflects the excellent contribution you make to the life and work of the school and the community. You take on responsibilities willingly and with a great deal of maturity. This prepares you well for the next stage of your education and the world of work.

It is clear that you have much pride in your school. Like you, we judge your school to be a good one. You are well taught, and make good progress. Although the overall standards reached are average, standards in the core subjects of mathematics, English and ICT are above average and, overall, you make good progress. You are being offered an increasing range of courses, well suited to your interests and aspirations. In addition, you can access a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Some of these are associated with the school's specialist status, which has made a very positive impact on standards and the activities on offer. Many of you participate well in sport, too, and this helps to promote your healthy lifestyles. You generally get on well together, and told us how much you appreciate the improvements in behaviour since the last inspection.

The school is well led and managed. The leadership team rigorously examines how well it is performing to find ways of improving it further. We have pointed out two main ways in which we feel the school can best raise its performance. First, we have asked the school to ensure that leaders of all subjects carry through whole-school policies on target setting, marking and the use of assessment to good effect. Second, the quality of marking is variable and we have asked the school to ensure you get clear messages about how to improve in all your subjects.

We wish you every success for the future, and are sure that you will continue to make such a positive contribution to the school's successes.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Lead inspector