

Ladybridge High School Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134646
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	341488
Inspection dates	09–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	823
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judith Marsden
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary D'Arcy
Date of previous school inspection	November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 32 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, students, parents and partners. They observed the school's work and looked at some of the school's documentation including records of students' attainment and attendance, school plans and evaluation documents, examples of support for specific students and some minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed and read questionnaires filled in by some members of staff, a sample of students and by 283 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- students' recent and current progress and learning and the extent to which attainment is being raised, particularly in mathematics and English
- the quality of teaching and learning and the impact of plans for improvement
- how safe students feel in the school and their behaviour
- the impact of care, guidance and support on removing barriers to learning.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than average but has a growing number of students. It has a specialist resource base with 10 places for students with autism. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well above average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average.

The school has a federation arrangement in place with Rivington and Blackrod High school. It became a 'Keys to Success' school in June 2008. It is a specialist sports college and is affiliated to the Youth Sports Trust as well as holding the Active Mark for Sport. It has gained many awards, including Healthy Schools, Arts Mark, Diana Gold Award and International Schools Award. It is also affiliated with the University of the First Age.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a sound education and is improving rapidly. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C has more than doubled since 2007 and is now well above the national average. However when GCSE results in mathematics and English are taken into account attainment is still low. The attendance rate, which was a cause for concern, has improved significantly and is now above average. Behaviour and many other outcomes for students are good and their contribution to the community is outstanding. Students told inspectors that they feel very safe due to the excellent support they receive. They are proud to go to Ladybridge High School and fiercely loyal to its ethos of being an inclusive community. Parents are extremely positive about the school. All of these improvements are connected to the excellent leadership and dedication of the headteacher. She personifies the high expectations shared by her staff and the leadership team. Their motto of, 'If it's not good enough for my children, then it's not good enough.' is put into practice every day.

Despite the improvements, the school recognises that it still has some way to go before it fulfils its ambition to become outstanding in every aspect. The self-evaluation process provides a very good starting point. Improvements have been made to GCSE results in English and mathematics but need to be accelerated for all groups of students. Inadequate teaching and learning has been eradicated but more could be done to ensure that tasks in lessons are challenging enough for all students. There has been a steady trend of improvement for all groups of students although some, particularly White British boys in Key Stage 4, are still lagging behind. Students who join the school at times other than the start of Year 7 often face significant barriers to learning including literacy and language difficulties. Although they receive excellent specialist support more could be done to ensure there is an effective approach to developing their writing skills in all lessons.

The school has developed a good curriculum and extended the range of vocational options for students. Recently a programme of study has been put in place to develop learning skills and this is beginning to have a positive impact on progress, particularly in Key Stage 3.

The school's philosophy to include everyone is underpinned by the outstanding care, guidance and support students receive. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, as do those whose first language is not

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English. The school has significantly reduced the number of students who are excluded but has not compromised its expectations of behaviour. Incidents of misbehaviour are infrequent and have been reduced. When they do occur they often involve students who are recent arrivals from other schools and have previously found school life challenging. They receive excellent support and usually settle quickly into school life. Partnerships with specialist support agencies have flowered in the last two years and ensure students get very high levels of support. The school and its community are very diverse and this is celebrated at every opportunity. Students make a very significant contribution to community cohesion within their school and its locality. They are also well aware of the importance of good national and international relationships. As a result of its growing reputation the school has become more popular with parents and carers. The success with which the school develops and uses parental communication through the parents' forum is outstanding.

As the school has improved under the guidance of the headteacher so has the work of middle leaders. They have developed in confidence and are now ready to move all aspects of provision to the next level. Governors provide good support and challenge. The school has significantly reduced its large deficit budget and at the same time demonstrated satisfactory value for money. It has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics for all groups of students.
- Increase the rate of students' progress in lessons by ensuring that:
 - tasks set offer suitable challenge for all levels of ability
 - teachers use an effective approach in all subjects to improve students' writing and language skills.
- Raise the motivation and enjoyment of some groups of students, particularly White British boys in Key Stage 4 by:
 - encouraging more teachers to share innovative approaches to learning such as the use of information and communication technology.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The achievement and enjoyment of students is satisfactory, with much that is good. After two years of underperformance in Key Stage 4, academic outcomes improved significantly in 2008 and 2009. Results in most GCSE subjects have improved, although in many they are still low. In the newly introduced vocational subjects

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students make good progress. In Key Stage 3 progress has improved and is at least satisfactory in most lessons. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better than expected progress because of the excellent personalised support they receive. The school faces considerable challenges in managing the arrival of many students at other times than the start of Year 7. They include many students who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, these students make good progress.

Students told inspectors that they felt extremely safe in school and were very confident that the headteacher dealt effectively with any instances of bullying. Students have a good understanding of what it means to adopt healthy lifestyles although a small number do not always translate this into practice in their choice of lunchtime food. Behaviour is good and students are polite and respond well to directions from adults. Attendance is above average and the proportion of students who are persistently absent has been reduced to below average. The vast majority of students leave with good computing skills. The number of students who now progress to further education, training or jobs has grown. Despite this, because of their limited literacy and numeracy skills, some are not as well prepared for the next stage of their lives as they should be. The challenge that remains for the school is to ensure that in mathematics and English progress improves and outcomes for all groups of students are consistently high.

These are the grades for pupils'/children's outcomes

Students achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Students' attainment ¹	4
The quality of students' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which students feel safe	1
Students' behaviour	2
The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which students develop workplace and other skills and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Students' attendance	2
The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Inadequate lessons are now very rare because teachers rigorously apply the guidance they have been given on planning and assessment. Students make at least satisfactory progress and some groups do better than that. They know their individual targets and teachers monitor progress meticulously. Although lesson plans identify different targets for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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individual students, often the work set is identical. This means some tasks lack challenge for the more able and are too difficult for those with barriers to learning. Marking is done frequently, although most teachers do not give students enough advice on how to improve spelling, grammar and their writing skills. Support workers are very effective in helping students who have difficulty concentrating and whose potential behaviour could disrupt their own and others' learning; however, they are less successful in collaborating with teachers to focus on academic progress. Although there are examples of outstanding teaching that captivates and enthuses students, activities sometimes lack variety and there is only limited use of information and communication technology.

The curriculum has been well developed to meet the needs of students. There are good partnership arrangements with other local providers, allowing a wide range of vocationally based subjects, including diplomas, to operate successfully. Students like these courses and do well in them. The sports specialism has allowed the school to develop resources and a wide range of very popular extra-curricular activities. Gifted and talented students are identified in lesson plans although specific activities for them are still rather limited.

The school has excellent procedures to look after the personal well-being of students. Each one is valued and treated as an individual. Students greatly appreciate the many ways in which staff support and guide them. With only a few exceptions parents feel the procedures for encouraging good behaviour are fair and consistently applied. Students have high expectations of each other and still believe more could be done to reduce the boisterous behaviour of a few. Students receive excellent guidance when making choices of subjects and future careers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The most impressive part of the improvements made to the school is that they have been made without sacrificing the school's commitment to including everyone. The school is having a huge impact on tackling inequality within its community. The way in which it promotes community cohesion is outstanding. It has done this by successfully reaching out to parents who are having a great impact on the work of the school. The parents' forum provides an excellent communication channel. The efforts of the headteacher and senior team are showing positive results in all outcomes for students. They have put in place an excellent self-evaluation process and ambitious plans for the future. Middle managers now have access to a wide range of accurate information about students' progress and are beginning to use this

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effectively. Governors are supportive and knowledgeable. They have taken robust action where necessary to ensure the effective running of the school. The budget recovery plan is reducing the deficit in the school's finances. The procedures for ensuring safeguarding of students meet and exceed government requirements. Strong performance management has eradicated inadequate lessons. Work to further boost outcomes in mathematics and English is already under way.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. The most common areas of praise are about the work of school leaders and the way in which children are safeguarded. Many parents commented on the trend of improvement that has taken place in the last two years and their renewed faith in the school. A few parents feel that some aspects of behaviour management are overly harsh. Inspectors found that the school managed the rare problems with students' behaviour effectively. Most other negative comments were in relation to specific issues regarding individual students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ladybridge High School Sports College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 283 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 823 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	107	38	158	56	14	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	110	39	162	57	7	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	97	34	153	54	22	8	6	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	100	35	163	58	16	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	107	38	161	57	10	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	31	150	53	39	14	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	84	29	169	60	18	6	5	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	98	34	155	55	15	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	90	32	166	59	14	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	103	36	145	51	24	9	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	24	163	58	30	11	8	3
The school is led and managed effectively	124	44	148	52	5	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	131	46	142	50	7	2	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



11 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ladybridge High School Sports College, Bolton BL3 4NG

Many thanks for the friendly welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we inspected your school this week. We would particularly like to thank the students we spoke to. We think that your school provides you with a sound education and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Here are some of the things we were particularly impressed by:

- the GCSE examination results have improved significantly in the last two years
- the school is very well led and is continuing to improve
- the improved attendance rates which, for most of you, are above average
- the good curriculum which includes a wide choice of options
- your good behaviour and the way you get on together
- your outstanding contribution to the school community
- the outstanding support you receive.

The headteacher and her deputy worked with us to decide on some ways in which they will achieve their ambition to make the school outstanding. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- raise standards in English and mathematics for all groups of students
- make sure that tasks set in lessons offer suitable challenge for all of you
- make sure all teachers concentrate on improving your writing and language skills
- encourage more teachers to share innovative approaches to learning such as the use of information and communication technology.

It is really good news to see the school going in the right direction and you should be exceedingly proud of the part you are playing. We would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely
Andrew Johnson HMI

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