

North Leamington School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125748
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	359934
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis HMI

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1242
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Lambert
Headteacher	David Hazeldine
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2007
School address	Sandy Lane Blackdown, Leamington Spa CV32 6RD
Telephone number	01926 338711
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 36 lessons and saw 48 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on current students' progress, improvement plans, policies for child protection and equality of opportunity and lesson observation records. Inspectors considered questionnaires from 335 parents and carers, 198 students and 124 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do students learn in mathematics?
- How effective are the use of targets and intervention strategies in all key stages?
- How effective are mixed-age tutor groupings in supporting students to fulfil their potential and develop well socially and personally?

Information about the school

North Leamington is larger than the average secondary school. Its large sixth form also takes in students from other local schools. The school has held specialist arts college status since 1999. In September 2009, students from across the school's four sites were brought together onto one campus comprising a set of brand new buildings. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. A few students speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school's sports and arts facilities are used by the local community.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

North Leamington is a good school. The headteacher's vision in bringing all the students together into brand new well-designed buildings on one site has proved highly beneficial in developing social cohesion and providing an excellent learning environment. Managers' skill and thorough preparation, well supported by the governing body, ensured that this major development took place without disruption to students' learning. Students and staff are rightly proud of their new school and almost all students enjoy school life to the full and feel very safe. Students make an outstanding contribution to school and community life in many ways, including through the arts and by taking on roles of responsibility and leadership.

Students' results have improved notably since the last inspection. Results overall are broadly average. Students make good progress in their learning, particularly in the sixth form. Learning in mathematics, while less effective than in other subjects, is satisfactory and improving because of increased attention to monitoring students' progress and providing extra support where needed.

The large majority of lessons are good or better because of teachers' careful planning and good use of a range of strategies that encourage active participation by students. Information and communication technology is used particularly well. Teaching of mathematics is less interesting and does not always capture students' interest and ensure good progress. Assessment systems are comprehensive but not yet fully embedded across all subjects. Marking and feedback to students in a few subjects is insufficiently effective in ensuring they improve their work over time.

The good curriculum benefits significantly from the arts specialism. Students' creative and artistic skills are well developed. Pastoral care is very good. The new arrangements for supporting students using mixed-age groupings are working well to develop students' confidence and skills including in team work, communication and in leadership. Support for students who are at risk of underperforming is now considerably strengthened because of a much improved system for monitoring progress using appropriate targets.

The inclusive sixth form makes good provision including a broad curriculum which is well matched to students' range of abilities. The popular one year course which provides a pathway to advanced level is a good example of innovation to meet a specific need. Students achieve well compared to their prior attainment and make good use of their study in taking the next step in their education or into employment. As the sixth form has increased in size, managers have sustained and improved the quality and effectiveness of provision, for example, by strengthening the arrangements for guiding and supporting students through their academic study.

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The headteacher, the governing body and managers share a clear ambition to raise standards and develop the provision to be of the highest quality. Staff across the school understand and support this ambition unequivocally. The concerted effort by managers and staff to establish and embed effective systems and an inclusive culture as part of the new school ethos is coming to fruition because of good management based on carefully planned and implemented actions. Self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive and mostly self-critical. All these factors contribute to the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics by:
 - supporting teachers to use a wider range of interesting and engaging teaching strategies
 - sharing the best practice in active learning strategies evident in other subjects across the mathematics team.
- Promote the consistent use of assessment across all subjects by:
 - spreading the best practice in marking and the provision of constructive feedback evident in some subjects across the others
 - monitoring the quality of marking and feedback closely and using this information to support individual teachers to improve their practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspectors observed mostly enthusiastic students making good or better progress in the large majority of lessons. Most students learn skills and knowledge quickly and effectively, encouraged by teachers' strategies to make sure they take responsibility for their own learning. In particular, students develop a wide range of personal learning skills well which enables them to make the most of lessons.

Students' prior attainment is broadly average. Since the previous inspection, results have improved markedly. The percentage of students who gain more than five A* to C GCSE grades is above average, but when English and mathematics are included, the percentage is average. However, results in these two subjects are improving strongly and are above average in English. Results in the school's specialist subjects have improved to be average. Most groups of students achieve equally well. In particular, the small but increasing number of students for whom English is not their first language and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Despite the school's efforts, a small group of students with a poor track record of attendance, as a result of a wide range of factors, underperformed significantly in 2010.

Students have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Their enthusiasm is used productively to create opportunities and help all enjoy school life. They listen to each other and work together well in lessons. A very few students become passive when teaching is uninteresting and unexciting, so pace of learning drops. Because of high participation in sport and other fitness activities, including dance, combined with good awareness of the importance of a healthy diet, students adopt healthy lifestyles and are positive about how the school helps with this. Students' contribution to school and community life is

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remarkable. They helped in the design of the new campus and were influential in shaping new arrangements. Using the arts specialism, students' involvement with primary schools, community groups including the elderly and local theatres is commendable. Students' lives are enriched by a wide range of social and cultural experiences but, sometimes, not enough time is allocated to reflection and spiritual development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Most teachers plan and use a wide range of strategies to make sure that their teaching matches students' ability. They use high quality materials and adapt these to provide extra challenge or a more helpful format relative to students' differing abilities. Teachers' questions in the majority of lessons work very well to extend knowledge. A rigorous lesson observation scheme is used constructively and has contributed significantly to improvements in teaching. Assessment is used well across the majority of subjects, but systems are less well established in others. In a few cases, teachers do not ensure that their suggestions for improvement given in feedback on marked work are used by students productively.

The curriculum is well developed and broad, with pathways for all subjects into the sixth form. Literacy and information and communication technology skills are developed very well but development of numeracy is less effective. Personal, social and health education is highly effective. The arts are used in the curriculum extensively. For example during

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Year 6, prior to joining the school, students complete an arts project which supports their transition into the secondary school. A high percentage of students are involved in many different arts initiatives, including major artistic performances. Popular extra-curricular activities cover a wide range of interests including sports: however, evaluation of participation rates is limited.

A significant number of students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are cared for very well. Work to improve attendance is successful for almost all students. Support for learning has increased because those most in need can be more easily identified as a result of effective use of assessment data. The process is beginning to have a strong impact in ensuring that all groups of students consistently reach their full potential.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior managers give very good support to middle managers, who are capable and accept a high level of accountability for the areas for which they are responsible. Strongly led by the highly experienced headteacher, managers' actions to introduce many new and well-considered arrangements as part of the move to the new site have been carefully implemented to good effect. The school development plan, although covering the essential actions, is lengthy and often over-general. Development plans at department level, however, are particularly sharply focused and have ensured mostly consistent improvement across subjects, although a very few have improved at a slower rate than others. Sharing of good practice is increasing but is not yet used to full effect in ensuring consistently high quality in all aspects of the school's work. Quality assurance through lesson observations has worked well to improve teaching but has not yet been fully successful in ensuring a consistent quality in assessment.

The governing body is experienced and provides challenge, for example in ensuring that targets for students' performance are suitably demanding. Numerous methods, including the use of text messages and web access, are used to engage with parents and carers. Attendance at parents' evenings is high. Partnerships are used highly productively and these are numerous. A strong partnership with the University of Warwick has ensured a high quality graduate teacher programme is in place at the school. Equality of opportunity is central to the school's culture and discrimination of any sort is tackled robustly. Inspectors confirmed this through discussions with students. The progress of groups of students is monitored closely. Because of the broad curriculum and the school's

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willingness to provide for students from a very wide range of backgrounds, opportunities to engage in education are available to all.

High priority is given to safeguarding by all, including the governing body. Arrangements for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff are well established and thorough. Records are complete. Health and safety are promoted well but a very few risk assessments require updating. The school's resources and premises are maintained to a very high standard with due regard to promoting environmental responsibility. Students are actively involved in promoting sustainability.

A thorough audit of the school's relationship with its local, national and international communities has informed a detailed action plan to promote community cohesion. Much has been achieved already with impact evident in the harmonious atmosphere and the very good local and regional relationships. International links are very well established and used well to make students aware of national and international issues.

These are the grades for 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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form has grown in size and popularity. A large majority of Year 11 students progress to the sixth form along with an increasing number from other schools. Results at GCE A and AS level are below average, particularly for high grades, but students make consistently good progress compared to their often below average starting points. The large majority go on to relevant further or higher education or employment including those who complete the one year intermediate level pathway course. Most complete their courses and progression between levels of study is high.

Improvements to teaching in the sixth form mean that the large majority of lessons contain an appropriate level of challenge and help develop students' independent learning

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skills. Equally, there is a strong focus on skill development through the vocational courses, including through pathways at intermediate level and in arts subjects. Partnerships with local schools and a further education college open up further opportunities to develop the good curriculum to help match students' needs and interests. The inclusion of general studies as a mandatory aspect of the curriculum has not always served students' interests well and is rightly being reviewed. Health and well-being education is well planned and delivered.

Good leadership and management have built on the strengths of sixth form provision and developed it as a key part of the school's work.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from parents and carers was above average. The responses show a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school's work. In particular, almost all respondents agreed that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps students safe. Parents' and carers' expressed less satisfaction with the extent to which the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. However, inspectors judged that most arrangements for gathering parents and carers' views are well developed and that particular care is taken to ensure that these communication arrangements work well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Leamington School 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 335 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1242 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	130	39	193	58	11	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	172	51	157	47	3	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	130	39	168	50	25	7	7	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	123	37	166	50	25	7	6	2
The teaching is good at this school	114	34	192	57	10	3	5	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	105	31	186	56	32	10	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	103	31	203	61	13	4	2	1
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)	108	32	178	53	15	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	121	36	177	53	21	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	99	30	173	52	28	8	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	91	27	172	51	20	6	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	135	40	164	49	10	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	152	45	156	47	17	5	3	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. 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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of North Leamington School, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RD

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you, as well as seeing you at work in the new school.

Inspectors judge your school to be good. Results are average and improving. Most of you make good progress. Your progress in mathematics has been slower but is now satisfactory. Teachers help you to develop good awareness of safety, health and well-being. Many of the skills you learn, such as teamwork, prepare you well for your future. Your attendance is above average.

The large majority of lessons are good. You told us you like the variety of interesting activities teachers use. We agree that this works well in most subjects but we judge that the teaching of mathematics is less effective. The quality of marking and feedback is not yet consistently high in all subjects. The school's curriculum is broad and well matched to your needs. You are cared for very well. Because teachers use assessment data regularly to check on your progress, the support you receive to help you learn has improved and is good. Sixth form provision is good. You learn quickly and effectively because of good teaching and improved guidance and support. The curriculum is broad and helps you to progress through levels of study.

The headteacher and managers ensured the move to the new school went smoothly. They have made a number of new arrangements, most of which are working very effectively. You have played an important part in making the new school a success by working well together and through your enthusiasm for school life. These are the actions we have asked the school to take to improve further.

Raise the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.

Ensure that marking and feedback are of a consistently high quality.

Finally, inspectors were impressed by the outstanding contribution that you make to school and community life in very many ways. Well done.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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