

Littleover Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112956
Local Authority	Derby City
Inspection number	311068
Inspection dates	16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

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 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1533
6 th form	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Mitchell
Headteacher	Mr David Nichols
Date of previous school inspection	10 - 13 November 2003
School address	Pastures Hill Littleover Derby DE23 4BZ
Telephone number	01332 513219
Fax number	01332 516580

Age group	11 - 18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and an Additional Inspector. The school was visited for one day.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation exercise, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records and documentation, observation of the school at work, interviews with senior members of staff and pupils and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized 11-18 comprehensive school serving the Littleover, Mickleover and Normanton areas of Derby. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average and attainment on entry is above average. 60% of students are of White British background, with other pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Indian (16%) and Pakistani (12%). The proportion of students with English as a second language is higher than the national average. Attendance is well above the national average. The school holds the following awards: Artsmark Silver, Careers Mark, Sports Mark, Health Promoting Schools and the Healthy Schools Award. Specialist science and mathematics status was awarded in September 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Littleover Community School is a highly successful school, which has developed a culture of high aspiration and achievement. Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the standard of education provided is outstanding. There are many reasons why the school is so successful, the most significant of which are the exceptional leadership at all levels, which drives continuous improvement, and the prevalence of outstanding teaching. Consequently, pupils are extremely positive about their learning. They are in no doubt about their school's expectations of them to achieve highly and this instils confidence in all of them, irrespective of their abilities. A very large number of parental questionnaires were received at inspection; these indicate overwhelming support for the school's work. The comment 'This is an excellent school with outstanding leadership and an inclusive family feel', typifies the vast majority of parents' views.

Pupils join the school with above average attainment. The school builds on this to achieve outstanding standards that are consistently well above national averages in Key Stage 3 tests. Similarly high standards are achieved at Key Stage 4, where results have continuously improved, and are significantly above national averages at every benchmark. In particular the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE English and mathematics at A*-C grades are exceptionally high, as are the proportion gaining five or more A*-C grades, and five or more A*-G grades.

Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities make outstanding progress from Years 7 to 11. This is because the school sets challenging targets for all its pupils at both Key Stages and supports and guides them very well. School leaders are particularly careful to analyse any areas of relative underperformance, for example the achievement of higher ability pupils in the Key Stage 3 English tests improved in 2007 following intensive actions by the school. Similarly the school was disappointed with the number achieving the higher A*- B grades at GCSE in 2006. Robust action was taken to address this, resulting in significant improvements at the higher grades in 2007.

Specialist status in mathematics and science is contributing significantly to the school's success. In particular, the use of additional resources, in information and communication technology (ICT), is improving teaching and learning across the school.

The school ethos is one of high expectations within a warm and supportive environment. This prompts outstanding personal growth and development of pupils. Their behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and at social times, and they display considerable enjoyment of school. Relationships with teachers are strong; pupils speak positively of the teaching in the school and their respect for their teachers' efforts. Attendance is well above the national average. Many pupils make excellent contributions to the school and community, for example, the organisation of Charity Week by Year 11 pupils, the large number developing skills as sports leaders and the willingness of sixth formers to help younger pupils with their learning.

Teaching and learning are outstanding, with much teaching that is of an exceptionally high standard. Teachers plan their lessons very well and routinely share clear learning objectives with pupils. They have consistently high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond to this really well. Lessons move at a brisk pace and are well organised. Many teachers use probing questioning effectively to prompt deeper thinking from pupils. There is increasingly effective use of ICT across the curriculum, a significant improvement since the last inspection. In the most successful lessons, teachers demonstrate skill in providing high levels of challenge for all pupils. They engage pupils through a variety of interesting and relevant tasks, which encourage pair and group work. This is prompting valuable independent and cooperative learning skills. Pupils respond eagerly in lessons, many commenting that they find them interesting and fun.

The curriculum of the school was not inspected in detail, but it is clear that pupils are achieving excellent progress through the current provision. All pupils study both mathematics and statistics at GCSE, and double science, together with English and English Literature. Over 90% of pupils also study a foreign language at Key Stage 4, which far exceeds the government target. The high standards being achieved in mathematics and science at Key Stage 4 encourage large numbers of pupils to pursue these subjects at Advanced level. However, this is an inclusive school and lower ability pupils achieve outstanding progress too, particularly through their GCSE English and mathematics courses, where results are impressive. Health education, and pupils' understanding of its importance, are both good. A wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities complement the curriculum; in particular, large numbers of pupils enjoy a variety of sporting, musical and drama activities.

The quality of care pupils receive is excellent. Pupils say they feel safe and acknowledge the strength of the school's concern for, and systems to ensure, their welfare. Equally excellent is the academic guidance provided to pupils and the robust and effective system of tracking and monitoring their progress. The school is quick to identify when pupils are underachieving and implements a range of useful interventions, including mentoring, individual support, booster sessions and liaison with parents. Heads of year provide excellent support for pupils' personal welfare and their academic achievement.

There is exemplary leadership at all levels across the school. The headteacher continues to provide outstanding vision, direction and leadership for the school's work. He is respected by pupils, staff and parents. A strong and capable senior management team who share his vision ably supports him. There is a clear focus on raising achievement, resulting in continual improvement over recent years. As a result, a success culture has been created throughout the school which staff and pupils share. Highly effective self-evaluation has enabled the school to build very successfully on its strengths and improve any perceived weaknesses. Very good systems are in place to monitor teaching and learning and to evaluate and improve standards in different subjects.

Subject leaders are strong contributors to the improvement agenda and form an effective and highly motivated middle leadership team. They are clear about their roles in developing teaching and learning and provide good direction for the work of their teams.

Governors support the school well in their role as critical friends. Overall, there has been substantial and sustained improvement since the last inspection. Given the school leaders' success in raising standards and maintaining the school's considerable strengths, value for money is excellent and the school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The work of the shared sixth form is outstanding and it continues to improve. Excellent liaison between the two schools ensures consistency, with students working successfully in both settings. Standards achieved are exceptionally high, being consistently above national averages across a full range of subjects. In 2007, students made outstanding progress at Advanced level with 100% achieving A-E passes. Retention rates are very high. Sixth form students are very positive about their courses and value the good relationships they have with their teachers. They enjoy their enrichment programme and the various responsibilities available to them, particularly assisting with lower school activities. Students comment favourably on the high quality guidance and support provided for them. Teaching, leadership and management of the sixth form are all outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standard of all teaching and learning to match the outstanding practice evident in the school.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
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	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

17 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Littleover Community School, Littleover, Derby DE23 4BZ

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. It was a pleasure to observe your work and talk with some of you about this. Your views are important to us and we appreciated your openness and cooperation. It is very clear that most of you are pleased to attend Littleover and really value the way that your teachers care for you and help you to achieve so highly.

Our view is that your school provides you with outstanding education and that you are right to be very proud of it. You are set challenging targets and you generally achieve them. You make excellent progress by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. The great majority of you have very positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in your excellent attendance and behaviour. You make exceptional progress in your learning because you are particularly well taught and provided with very high quality care, guidance and support. Your teachers know you very well and do their best to meet your needs and ensure you achieve as well as you can.

The school aims at achieving academic excellence but also attaches importance to developing your personal and social skills and preparing you for adult life. We feel that your school is highly successful in achieving these aims. Many of you are involved in sports, music and drama and value the very wide range of extra-curricular activities available to you. You have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school and many of you do this in impressive style.

Your school is extremely well led and managed. Your headteacher Mr Nichols provides outstanding leadership and he is strongly supported by the senior staff of the school. All of the staff shares the aim of helping you to achieve the best results you can. They are particularly good at analysing your progress and results and working out how things can be improved further. As a result, we feel sure your school will continue to improve. To do this, we have asked Mr Nichols and your teachers to continue to improve teaching and learning to the very highest levels, so that as many lessons as possible are as good as the best ones we saw. We feel sure you will continue to do well and look forward to hearing of your future success.

Best wishes,

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector