

May 2007 Report

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school. Most students are from minority ethnic groups, with the largest groups within the community being students of Pakistani and Indian heritage. Almost one in five students are from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds. Over four fifths of the school speak English as an additional language and many are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is high, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. A high proportion of students join the school after Year 7. The school serves an area of higher than average deprivation. It is a specialist science and technology school and has a second specialism in languages. It has also recently been designated a training school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

One student told inspectors that this is a '...very fabulous school.' Its overall effectiveness is outstanding. Students enter the school with below average standards, achieve very well and leave the school having achieved above average standards in their GCSEs. The school's specialisms of science, technology and languages have had a significant impact and students achieve well in these subjects. Standards in English at GCSE are average, and the school has rightly focused on formal and extended writing skills to support students' progress at GCSE and GCE A level. There is a strong culture of learning and students enjoy their lessons. Many students stay on in the sixth form because they value the high quality of teaching and the strong relationships they develop with their teachers. Lessons are characterised by fast pace, varied activities and very effective levels of challenge for all students.

Systems for tracking students' progress are very effective. Students' needs are very well known and they are monitored and supported extremely well, both academically and pastorally. There is a resolute, whole-school commitment to treating and caring for every student as an individual.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding because the school places the achievement and well-being of students at the heart of its work. The outstanding relationships throughout the school contribute significantly to this. Whilst provision for citizenship

education is satisfactory it is not fully developed across the curriculum and opportunities to monitor the progress of students in this subject are missed.

The school's leaders embody the culture of high expectations. Both the executive and associate headteachers have set an exceptionally clear, shared vision for the school. There is very effective leadership and management at all levels. Well developed monitoring and evaluation contributes significantly to school improvement and supports strong strategic planning. The school provides excellent value for money and its capacity for improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Loxford's sixth form is outstanding. Students, many of whom speak English as an additional language and find the demands of reading and writing at this level challenging, make outstanding progress. Standards, both in GCE A level and other business related courses are above average. There is a broad curriculum that very effectively meets the needs and interests of students and enables them to identify appropriate qualification routes so that they can achieve their goals. Students have the opportunity to gain accreditation in their personal development. Personal development and well-being are outstanding and there is a strong working environment that supports effective learning. Teaching and learning are outstanding because very high expectations motivate and challenge students effectively. Students value the high quality of personal care provided by teachers and are well supported in making their future choices. They participate fully in the life of the school, for example as reading mentors for younger students. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English by implementing additional strategies to support the quality of students' writing, particularly for older students.
- Improve citizenship provision to ensure that opportunities to explore all aspects are well developed across the curriculum, and that students' progress in this subject is carefully monitored.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students make outstanding progress during their time at school to achieve above average standards by the end of Year 11. In the first three years at the school, students make very strong progress from a low base. By the end of Year 9, standards are average in mathematics, although they remain below average in science and English. In Years 10 and 11, the pace of progress is accelerated. Standards in GCSE examinations are above average for mathematics and science, and average for English. Highly effective monitoring of students' progress ensures that they all achieve very well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, looked after children and those who are learning to speak English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students feel that 'It's a really safe and happy place to be'. The school provides a strong moral framework and appropriate opportunities for spiritual reflection which contribute to the excellent behaviour around the school. The multi-cultural dimension of the school is very effectively celebrated through a wide range of events. For example, to celebrate European Language Day, team activities highlighted the diversity of languages spoken at the school. Students are proud of the school, enjoy coming, attend well and work hard. The school provides excellent opportunities for students to develop the skills they need to help them to be successful once they leave school. Students know how to lead healthy lifestyles, although opportunities for physical activity in the sixth form are limited. Students are regularly consulted on many aspects of the school; for example, students form part of the panel for staff interviews. Students are central to the developments taking place to improve the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching is characterised by well-paced and varied activities that capture students' interest. Teachers demonstrate very strong subject knowledge, enabling students to make strong connections between different topics and ideas. Teachers use highly effective strategies to elicit information through sharply focused questions. For example, in one history lesson, students evaluated similarities and differences between the economic policies of Stalin and his predecessors through a carefully focused discussion. Students have very good opportunities to explore concepts through group and paired work and are given excellent guidance on how their work will be assessed. Students respond with enthusiasm and produce work of high quality; for example in an advanced level chemistry lesson students made outstanding progress in their understanding of chemical concepts because of the high level of challenge. Students have a very good knowledge of the levels they are working at and teachers provide good guidance about how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum offered by the school is outstanding. Learners are well served because work is thoughtfully matched to their diverse needs through a wide variety of vocational and academic courses.

The school's specialisms are reflected clearly in the curriculum. For example, students can

access a wide range of science, technology and languages courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. The specialist status has also helped the school to develop very good curriculum links with other education establishments. For example, the school has shared good practice with partner schools in the use of information technology in art. The school has mapped curriculum provision against the statutory requirements for citizenship. However delivery of this subject across the curriculum is inconsistent and the monitoring of students' progress is weaker than in other subjects. Students value the wide and varied opportunities for enrichment activities that effectively support learning as well as personal development, such as the science breakfast club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care provided by the school is outstanding. There are robust systems in place for tracking and monitoring students' progress and for responding to their needs. Vulnerable students are monitored very carefully and there is excellent liaison both between teaching and non-teaching staff within the school and with outside agencies to ensure high levels of student care. Students value the way that teachers and other staff are approachable and helpful. Reports to parents are clear and valuable in setting straightforward improvement targets in each subject.

High quality, focused support is given in a range of settings to assist students in raising their expectations and achievements. There are very effective procedures in place to deal with any incidents of bullying or racial harassment. This school provides a safe and supportive environment which enables students to reach very challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The executive head teacher and the associate head teacher give exceptional leadership and have a very clear, shared sense of direction and high expectations for the school's future development. Rigorous evaluation by senior leaders helps them to form an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school's provision and drive improvement. The leadership and management of middle managers are excellent.

Comprehensive departmental reviews contribute well to highly effective school evaluation, although some monitoring data is not recorded formally. Staff professional development is valued and used effectively to improve the quality of leadership and teaching. Governors are strong 'critical friends' and they set a strategic direction which has standards and achievement and the welfare of students at its core. Financial planning is securely based upon the plans for further development of the school and on the outstanding day-to-day management of resources.