

General Introduction



Lytchett Minster School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of 1350 pupils, approximately 310 of whom are in the sixth form. The school is housed in the South Lytchett Manor House, together with a brand new Maths, Science and Humanities block and other modern extensions. The grounds are extensive and beautiful. The school is rural in situation (though the facilities of Bournemouth and Poole are only ten minutes' drive away) and these qualities make for an unusual and attractive school. Children come to us from three main village areas locally and cover the full range of intellectual



and social backgrounds, though this is generally a favoured area. Students and staff seem to enjoy, and thrive in, this environment. The school has developed a solid academic reputation over the years and at all levels students generally achieve well above national averages and add value. Our vocational courses are similarly highly regarded. Our KS3, GCSE and Sixth Form results generally place us in the top four or five schools in the county and sometimes even higher. Since 2000, we have had Performing Arts College status and, following an invitation from the DfE, have also been a Training School for some years. An application for Teaching School status is under consideration. The ethos of the school is strongly anchored in broad Christian values.

The school enjoys warm support from its parents and is well regarded in the community and across the county. It



was inspected in December 2009 and judged to be Outstanding. Sixth Form results have been particularly excellent in recent years with the value-added figure being the best in the whole of the South West in 2008, almost as strong in 2009 and in the top 10% schools for five years. A strong pastoral system forms the heart of the school and it is organised through five vertical divisions or 'houses', with the work of the Heads of House being co-ordinated by the Deputy Head (Community). The Sixth Form is built around a Year system. The quality of the school's pastoral support and cultivation of students' personal

development is particularly highly regarded by parents. The values of the school stand comfortably within a broad Christian tradition. Individuals matter at Lytchett Minster School and time is taken to encourage achievement and analyse problems where they occur. At the same time, pupils and students are encouraged to contribute to the life of the whole school and a desire to do this pervades the school. The curriculum is innovative and designed to ensure that all students can find a way to thrive. It was highly commended by Ofsted.

For academic purposes, the school is organised into faculties, with the administration and development of the curriculum being overseen by the Deputy Head (Curriculum). Much work has been done in the last few years to analyse student performance and results at all levels have been extremely good. In recent years, the school has achieved among the highest results for a comprehensive school in the county. An Action Research Group is well supported by staff and is exploring innovative approaches to teaching and learning. There is a lively culture of professional development in the school.



The school is, consequently, very popular and growing. There is a significant demand for places from outside the school's prescribed catchment area and a number of pupils have to be turned away each year. The school is gradually growing and approximately 170 pupils are now admitted into Year 7 from two local junior schools, with a further 70+ joining us in Year 9 from a middle school slightly further away. A growing number join us in the Sixth Form. From 2013, the school will grow to about 1550, with the middle school students joining us in Year 7.

Pupils are currently taught in two different ability bands from admission in Year 7. These are determined by Cognitive Ability tests conducted whilst still in the junior school and by school report. In Year 8, there is a degree of setting and this is extended in Years 9 - 11. There is a fair amount of mobility between classes and the school always seeks to ensure that pupils are located in the most appropriate group for their speed of learning. ICT literacy is developed throughout the school, with the majority of students being entered for a BTEC in ICT.

In the Sixth Form, the bulk of our students choose between a range of 29 AS and A2 subjects and a range of vocational courses. We have introduced BTEC National awards in Performing Arts, Media Production, Sport and Health & Social Care and these have proved to be extremely successful, with staff receiving recognition for the quality of their vocational work. At A level, some of our students have achieved some of the highest marks in the country. For less able students, we run a one year course based on 4 BTEC First Certificates in ICT, Media, Sport and Health & Social Care. Students have excellent study facilities and results are consistently high.



Staff run an extensive and diverse range of extracurricular activities and contributions here are always very welcome – and much appreciated by students. Our sports, music and drama traditions are particularly deeply embedded in the ethos and calendar of the school and result in students being

committed to and very positive about the school. The school runs a varied and extensive programme of trips to enrich students' learning. A number of these are abroad and have included expeditions to Barcelona, Paris, the French Alps, Iceland, New York, China, Italy, Moscow and St Petersburg, Malawi and Poland – and this is something we are eager to extend. With its extensive community commitments in sport and, increasingly, in its significant cultural programme, the school aims to be at the heart of the local community.

The school has a long-standing commitment to staff training and we were delighted to be awarded IiP status in 2004 and to be re-designated in 2007. The school has a well-developed tradition of individual support for newly qualified teachers, which includes a reduced timetable in the first year, considerable subject support and a programme run by a non-subject mentor. It has also a well-developed programme for recently appointed or aspiring middle managers. Our Training School role has opened up many other opportunities for staff both in terms of their own training and development and also in their chance to contribute towards the training and mentoring of others.

After decades of sparse investment, the school's facilities have improved rapidly: the school has just completed a very substantial building programme in February 2009 running to over £16 million. A new teaching block houses 'state of the art' science laboratories, bright and spacious teaching rooms for mathematics and humanities, including two



large ICT suites and a sixth form seminar room. Each classroom is fitted with an interactive whiteboard. These new teaching facilities are amongst the very best and put us in an excellent position to deliver a first rate curriculum appropriate to the 21st century. Part of this recent building programme has also included provision of a very attractive Café and a large 'university style' senior library, complete with video conferencing facilities and an adjoining KS4 ICT space aimed at developing student independence in learning. Last year we also refurbished our existing junior library which now provides a quiet but vibrant space for our younger students. During Summer 2001, substantial new tennis courts were provided; a large arts complex, providing excellent and well linked art, music, dance and drama studios together with a high quality theatre, recording studio and video editing facilities, was completed in May 2003. The school's indoor sports facilities are excellent, with a gymnasium and fitness suite. Another new facility, a floodlit multi-use sports surface, has also just been completed, providing important new facilities for our students. There are twelve fully networked class-sized areas across the whole school with approximately 500 computers being available in total (all full time teachers are issued with a laptop). Staff facilities are attractive and well equipped, in terms of the main staff room, a training room and workrooms for almost every department. The refurbishment of the manor house's top floor now provides a suite of meeting rooms, a Guided Learning Centre for students with special education needs and a Learning Support Unit for the small number of students at risk of fixed term or permanent exclusion. With the school approaching its final growth stage, another phase of building is about to get under way. These major developments have already had and will continue to have an invigorating effect on the school and this is an exciting time for us.

Aims of the school

Education - comprehensive education that sets out to give the opportunity for success to as many pupils as possible rather than select out the possibility of failure - is the overriding purpose of the school. Between the years of 11 and 18, children are at their most vigorous and volatile, full of potential that may or may not be fulfilled in later life and the challenge for a school is to encourage pupils to develop the appropriate expectations and disciplines they will need to convert ability into a life of achievement. Their time with us should not only lead to the best academic results and higher (or further) education route of which they are capable, but should also cultivate lively, enquiring and independent minds, well-focused but capable of lateral exploration, with the skills needed to become autonomous and lifelong learners.

This goes beyond the requirements of the examination process and requires us to approach each Key Stage with a much broader, richer focus as a foundation for the next level of learning and to prepare students accordingly. A key aspect of this is to cultivate their ability to use the prime communication tool, language, expertly and in a way that is appropriate in every subject area and this intention is at the very heart of the redesignation of the school's specialism. Our role is to help students develop a clear sense of the different paths that their careers may take and the choices that are best suited to them; to help them be fluent in the use of what will be the standard technology of their work lives — able to use a computer for the powerful tool that it can be in well-trained hands.

Additionally, at an age when many parents increasingly cease to exercise effective guidance of their children, we have a responsibility to help young people reflect on their personal and social development, not only so that the major disasters are avoided (drug taking, pregnancy, leaving home, dropping out and so on), but also that healthy development occurs within a sound framework of values that are strongly held and readily defended. In these few years, children are not only laying down the foundations of their future careers but also defining their personality and beliefs and we need to encourage them to plough back into the school and community something of what they have gained from them, so that the development of ability, individuality and initiative is paralleled by the development of responsibility and active, contributing membership of a diverse, thriving and humane community. Young people also need to know that life has a moral and spiritual dimension that goes beyond mere membership of the local community.

Our guiding values are that

- All students are of equal value, regardless of their gender, race, ability or background
- All students, therefore, are entitled to equal access to the resources and opportunities offered by the school
- All students are entitled to high quality, well planned and well organised teaching and learning throughout their education; they can expect regular feedback as to the quality of their performance and as to what they must do to raise that, through regularly and thoroughly marked assignments as well as through discussion with the teacher
- For effective teaching and learning to take place, students must be trained in high standards of personal behaviour and learn how to develop self discipline
- All students must learn how to be tolerant of others and to respect other points of view
- Encouragement and the creation of a vibrant learning environment and culture are the best ways to raise student motivation to learn
- Parents retain their responsibility for the development of their children until the age of 18 and the school has a duty to encourage effective and well-informed co-operation between staff and parents in the oversight and guidance of pupils whilst at the school. A very high proportion of parents attend parents' evenings



The area

The school lies within an area of outstanding natural beauty. Within forty minutes, there is the New Forest; within thirty, a coastline that has attracted World Heritage status for its beauty and geological interest; within twenty, some of the most beautiful Dorset countryside and villages; just five to ten miles away are some of the best beaches in the country. Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch are about fifteen minutes away and form a large and thriving conurbation with outstanding shopping and leisure facilities. Road, rail, air – and ferry! – routes are all excellent.





Focus of Arts College and Training School status

Lytchett Minster School was officially designated an Arts College for the third time in December 2009. The original emphasis was simply on the performing arts – music, dance and drama – but English and the cultivation of language as the basis for almost all learning, whatever the subject, has been placed at the heart of the current designation. Our vision is based on a broad definition of the arts to include visual and media arts and these have a growing profile within the school. An important aspect is the associated areas of technical production (sound recording, computer sequencing of musical composition, live sound reinforcement, video editing) and design (set design and construction, lighting, costume, make-up, programme design, choreography etc). Students respond well to the challenges of these disciplines. At sixth form level, there will be an increasing emphasis on spoken-word performance that will be of particular benefit to English Language & Literature students (debating, constructing a live interview show, looking at the journalistic perspective needed to capture attention in such an environment, etc). The most important aspect, however, will be to develop and promote a clear understanding of how we can help students to develop the effective use of language to absorb information and ideas and be able to communicate them in different environments and for different audiences. We want to continue to explore the use of drama and dance to find new ways of developing the confidence of reserved more able students and the self esteem of the least able. Ultimately, we want all areas of the life of the school to be enriched by this initiative. Our overriding aim is to see a significant rise in standards, to enable us consistently to achieve 70% five A*- C at GCSE for students.

When given the opportunity to apply for an additional specialism, we had no hesitation in opting for the Training School initiative. This enables us to focus on the training of new teachers and the development of our own staff. The absolute emphasis is on developing the quality of teaching and learning across the entire school and the funding will not only enable us to bring in expert input from outside but also make it possible for colleagues to explore their own strands of development. The Training School role also implies a significant outreach to other secondary schools and we welcome this – in an education system characterised by shrinking local authorities and performance tables it is easy to become isolated as an individual school and, ultimately, risk stagnation. We don't intend to allow this! And indeed, we have already set up a county Forum for Heads of Music and are about to launch similar groups for Drama and English. The accommodation of the school is ideal for the holding of conferences and this is a role that we would like to develop over the coming years. Lytchett Minster School is a good school in which to learn the profession and in which to continue to develop, both in terms of teaching and learning but also in regard to leadership and management.

Provision

We are fortunate in having highly committed, able and well-qualified staff and well-disposed and responsive students. For the initiatives described above to take off, however, we also need expert training of staff, wide-ranging and challenging opportunities for students and excellent facilities for learning. Over the years of our specialism, we have achieved a great deal with regard to this but there is plenty of scope for further development. The current programme of workshops and master classes for students and staff needs to grow; our experience of artists in residence and visiting speakers and groups within the arts confirms that these are powerful ways of opening students' minds to opportunities that we could not provide. We now need to look at the opportunities that will enrich other areas of the curriculum. We need to look at the areas where collaboration with other schools would move us forward. The work we do with our feeder schools is well established but is always capable of having increased impact. A programme of professional concerts and shows has got under way but is capable of further development as part of our mission to place the school at the heart of the local community.

Balance

We are committed to providing students with a broad and balanced curriculum and the full range of opportunities they need for their personal and career development. The developments brought by the Arts College initiative have not in any way diminished the emphasis on other subjects. We are, consequently, always looking to develop projects that are as exciting and innovative in other areas and candidates with the vision to pursue this are especially welcome. This is as important outside the curriculum as much as within it and we encourage staff to be ambitious in their thinking. If students can experience excellence in the areas of their particular enthusiasm, this not only gives them the best starting point from which to develop themselves, it also enhances their commitment to the rest of their school experience.

Ofsted December 2009

What the inspectors had to say

Lytchett Minster is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection, when it was deemed good, it has made excellent progress under the strong leadership of the headteacher and senior managers. The senior management team's absolute focus is on providing equal opportunities for individual students in the main school and in the sixth form, and equipping them with the best possible social and academic skills necessary for them to meet the challenges of life after school. The programme of 'Action, Passion and Rigour' successfully encourages a **culture of individual ambition and independence** for each student. The governing body and parents and carers fully support the direction in which the school is moving. A parent wrote, 'I truly feel that they have the best interests of each child at the heart of all they do.' Rigorous evaluation of the impact of the school's action plans by leaders and managers shows no complacency. **The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.**

Attainment is consistently high and students make excellent progress.

Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are eager contributors in lessons. **They enjoy their learning** and respond well to the varied learning activities that teachers and learning support assistants plan for them.

A high proportion of outstanding and good quality teaching promotes students' learning very effectively. In most lessons, teachers generate excellent group or paired work that motivates students to think and learn for themselves. The teaching and intervention strategies, underpinned by an excellent curriculum, have the impact of accelerating students' progress significantly.

The pastoral 'family ethos' and the personal development of students are outstanding and are key elements in supporting the high achievement patterns. **The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school.**

No groups of students underperform. Significantly more students gain the higher GCSE grades because the school robustly tracks the achievement of more able students in Year 11 and quickly implements intervention measures when necessary. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress as a result of the caring and targeted encouragement they receive from teachers and learning and support staff.

Students speak very highly of the 'house' pastoral system. The school's clear structures, a comprehensive pastoral programme and positive relationships help students, including students needing additional support, to manage personal risk and to feel well cared for and safe. **Students respect one another** and the high levels of inclusion are central to the school's ethos, and reflected at every level.

The booklet 'A Year at Lytchett Minster' is a comprehensive illustration of so much that is excellent about the school.

The sheer breadth and depth of the curriculum in meeting the individual and often complex needs of all groups of students is outstanding. The impact of the school's specialism in dance, music, art and drama on students' learning and self-esteem has been immense and underpins much of the work in other subjects. Enrichment clubs in arts, sports and extra-curricular clubs have excellent participation rates and are commented on positively by students and parents and carers. Vocational courses have provided teachers with further options on learning styles and helped to personalise the offer for students. There is an extensive programme of community, work-related learning and business links. Transition arrangements for students entering in Years 7 and 9 work smoothly and nearly all students say that they settle into school routines very quickly.

Staff and students speak extremely warmly of the direct day-to-day involvement of the senior management team in school life and they are viewed as a powerful, motivating force throughout the school. They work closely with a very good team of middle leaders who are actively involved in the leadership and management of the school. Managers share effective practice and succeed in their aim of ensuring that performance in all departments matches that of the very best. The impact of their leadership can be seen in the high quality education provided by the school, the excellent progress made by students and in the creation of a **school ethos that is friendly, welcoming and mutually supportive.**

Sixth form performance has shown exceptional improvement since the last inspection. Students' academic progress is outstanding and attainment is high. In 2009, examination results were the best ever and value-added scores in A-level and BTEC courses were equal to the best with over half the students achieving A or B grades.

All these improvements have been made because of the outstanding leadership and management of the head of sixth form and sixth form tutors. The very strong, continuing focus is on meeting the needs of individual students. Ambitious plans and high expectations are shared and welcomed by the staff, students, and parents and carers.

In their response, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers were positive about the school and its impact on their children's well-being. The quality of pastoral care, the curriculum and opportunities for extra-curricular activities were highly praised. A minority of parents and carers expressed concern about behaviour, healthy lifestyles and insufficient information for them to support their children's learning. Inspectors found behaviour to be good, noted that there was a good range of healthy options available in the dining room and that there were clear procedures for parents and carers to approach the school about their children's work.