

Lytchett Minster School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113863
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	338257
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1231
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Read
Headteacher	Mr S R Clark
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 40 lessons, and held meetings with governors, teaching and support staff, pupils and the school's improvement partner. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence. This included assessment information, students' work, key policies and practices, including those on safeguarding and health and safety, records of the monitoring of teaching, school improvement plans and arrangements to support vulnerable learners. Parents and carers returned 549 questionnaires which were analysed by inspectors.

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

- trends in tests and examinations since the last inspection
- the quality of students' personal development
- whether the quality of teaching is challenging and skilled enough to be outstanding, as judged by the school
- how far students have developed independent learning skills in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Lytchett Minster is a large comprehensive set in beautiful grounds on the outskirts of the village of Lytchett Minster. Following a devastating fire in 2000, new, specialist buildings were completed earlier this year after a considerable period of disruption when the school operated on two sites. Students are admitted into the school in Years 7 from primary schools and in Year 9 from middle schools in the same local authority. A very high proportion of students are White British. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (mainly behavioural, emotional and social), including those with statements of special educational needs, is below average. The school was awarded Arts College status in September 2001 and re-designated in September 2005. It is a Training School within the High Performing Specialist Schools scheme and has recently achieved the International School Award.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

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. The ability profile of students on entry to the school is generally just above average, although the Year 11 year group in 2009, untypically, had a below-average profile. 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. The school's assessment and tracking systems monitor performance very closely, from entry to the school onwards. A high proportion of outstanding and good quality teaching promotes students' learning very effectively. Teaching is further supplemented by a wide range of very effective intervention strategies, closely linked to the very effective pastoral 'house system'. 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. Although there was a slight dip in attainment in 2009, current achievement is excellent throughout the school for all groups of students and most make much better-than-expected progress towards their personal, challenging targets. The school recognises that there is occasionally an inconsistency in the use of assessment by teachers to make students aware of how far they are on the way to achieving their targets. This is being addressed as a priority in the school development plan.

The pastoral 'family ethos' and the personal development of students are outstanding and are key elements in supporting the high achievement patterns. Students feel safe and are committed to a healthy lifestyle. Attendance is above average. The vast

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majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. The school undertakes its wider responsibilities as a specialist school exceptionally well. It is, for example, an excellent ambassador for the arts within the local community. Partnerships with external agencies are outstanding. Governance is good and governors' expertise has been invaluable in helping the school during the difficult and prolonged building programme.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency between teachers in informing students of how well they are performing in relation to their targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students make significantly better progress than might be expected throughout both Key Stages 3 and 4. The overall trend in high attainment continues to show a marked, upward trend. Teachers have high expectations of all students and monitor their progress rigorously. Current GCSE module test results in science and the school's own test data, and other GCSE and BTEC courses suggest that the school is likely to exceed its previous, best results. Targets at the end of Years 9 and 11 are regularly exceeded, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and in its specialist performing arts subjects. 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. The proportion of students leaving with five A* to G GCSEs is high and demonstrates the inclusive nature of the school. The quality of students' learning was exemplified in a Year 11 lesson on climate change. Students prepared their arguments for each country to argue their case, giving coherent and cogent explanations. The full range of features on the interactive whiteboards is used effectively to support learning in all subjects.

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. A younger student commented, 'This is a homely school.' The school council has a strong impact on school decision making, for example, contributing to the design of the new buildings and in choosing charities to support. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and promoted by well-planned citizenship and personal and social education courses throughout the school. Students know the importance of

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healthy lifestyles and the dining room offers healthy options for them to choose. The new dining hall is very popular but often overcrowded during inclement weather. Students have well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, which prepare them effectively for adult life. They make a substantial contribution to the life of the local and wider communities. The booklet 'A Year at Lytchett Minster' is a comprehensive illustration of so much that is excellent about the school. Strengths include partnerships with external agencies, the inspirational community arts week and school journeys to a host of countries including Russia, the USA, Poland, the Czech Republic, Iceland and Malawi. There is an outstanding 'Comenius partnership' with partners in Hungary, Spain and France.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Well-planned lessons enable students to develop excellent skills at interpreting information, making choices, decision-making and working in teams, and are often linked to future workplace skills. In lessons, all groups of pupils know their learning targets and are challenged to produce their best work. Students respond by being persistent in their approach to problem-solving tasks, for example in a Year 7 science lesson, when they struggled initially but all finally succeeded in identifying the cellular structure of an onion with the aid of a microscope. Pupils enjoy their active learning across all subjects, for example when Year 9 girls participated enthusiastically in a tag-rugby lesson on a very muddy playing field. There are good opportunities for teachers to review and share practice within and across departments, so that teaching and learning are continually enhanced. The school rightly recognises that

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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there are a few occasions when students need to be aware not only of their targets but also where they are in relation to those targets.

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. Students receive very good guidance about the next stages of their education, entering the sixth form or gaining employment. Contacts and communication with parents and carers are mostly good, although the survey shows there are a minority who would like more help to support their children’s learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has led the school with great skill through a difficult and disruptive period with contractors on site. 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.

Close attention is paid to ensuring that good safeguarding procedures are in place and that statutory duties are reviewed regularly and meet requirements. Policies and their impact are updated regularly to ensure that they reflect the best practice and are followed consistently by all staff. Professional support and in-service training days

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are regularly used to raise awareness of child protection and of teaching and curriculum issues. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.

Governance is good and the governing body includes a wide range of expertise. This expertise has been especially helpful in supporting the headteacher, after the fire nine years ago, through the difficult negotiations with a range of outside bodies and in seeing the new buildings through to completion. Governors now review their strategies for working with parents and carers and for holding the school accountable. For example, the promotion of community cohesion is good and has some outstanding features, which have been noted earlier in this report, although its impact on the school life is not fully evaluated. The effective promotion of equal opportunities leads to harmony across all ethnic groups and has improved the performance of students needing additional support.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Sixth form

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. Differences in performance between subjects and between boys and girls have narrowed significantly over the past three years. Attendance is high. 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

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carers. Key life-skills, such as independence, reliability and time management, are reflected for students in the models set by teachers. Excellent use is made of new technology. The use of ‘video conferencing’ with other schools and the ‘virtual learning environment’ is well established and extends students’ choices, and promotes learning autonomy. There is specific provision for extending and challenging students, for example programmes for distance learning in law, critical thinking and a range of successful BTEC courses. Valuable extension activities for all sixth formers include certificates in team leadership, sign language, first aid and volunteering, as well as opportunities to work as mentors, lead paired-reading with younger students and primary school liaison.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of 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.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lytchett Minster 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 549 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1231 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	211	38	297	54	32	6	7	1
The school keeps my child safe	195	36	336	61	13	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	218	40	285	52	38	7	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	217	40	297	54	27	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	193	35	307	56	30	5	2	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	142	26	295	54	83	15	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	114	21	342	62	65	12	5	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)	182	33	306	56	27	5	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	191	35	301	55	40	7	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	141	26	305	56	62	11	12	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	107	19	314	57	68	12	12	2
The school is led and managed effectively	162	30	309	56	45	8	9	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	226	41	289	53	27	5	5	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 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>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.



11 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Lytchett Minster School, Dorset BH16 6JD

We are writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. You will be pleased to learn that we judge Lytchett Minster to be an outstanding school. We were very impressed with so much of what we saw and heard over the two days.

These are the main findings of our inspection.

- All groups of students make excellent progress and achieve high levels of attainment.
- Students in the sixth form achieve outstanding results while contributing effectively as leaders within the main school.
- A high proportion of teaching is outstanding.
- The school provides you with an excellent academic and vocational curriculum which is flexible, meets your personal needs and is underpinned by a wide choice of extra-curricular activities.
- Dance, art, music, drama and sports activities provide you with excellent opportunities to develop skills for your personal development and underpin your enjoyment of learning. The pamphlet 'A Year in the life of Lytchett Minster' is a huge credit to the positive attitudes and high participation of all of you, across so many activities.
- You told us that the house pastoral system was a major strength of the school.
- The headteacher, his senior team, the teachers and support staff, and the governing body know the school very well and have shown great expertise in guiding the school through its re-building. We were impressed with the new buildings!
- The high levels of support and guidance provided to you allow you to flourish.

The inspection team agrees with the school that you are set challenging targets. However, on occasions some of you are not always clear where you stand in relation to reaching those targets and we have asked the headteacher to ensure teachers inform you about this consistently. You can help by working with your teachers so that you know how well you are performing. Once again, thank you for the welcome and we wish you the very best of luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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