

Limehurst Academy

Bridge Street, Loughborough, LE11 1NH

Inspection dates

30 April – 1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students achieve well and make good progress given their individual starting points.
- The large majority of teaching is good throughout the school. The quality of some teaching and learning is outstanding.
- Students point to the trust they have in their teachers, and the quality of their working relationships, as a strength of the school.
- Students demonstrate outstanding attitudes to learning; they cooperate effectively and know how to keep each other safe.
- Behaviour around the school is outstanding, and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good.
- Students appreciate, value and promote the school's rich multicultural diversity.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. This ensures effective teamwork and consistent approaches to improving teaching and students' achievement.
- Leaders at all levels have a strong influence on school improvement.
- There is a determined focus on the development of students' literacy and communication skills across the school. This particularly benefits those for whom English is an additional language.
- The school sets out to provide the best possible education for its students. It has prepared well for the challenges of becoming an 11 to 16 school from September 2013.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some aspects of teaching require further development.
- The school's expectations of high quality, informative marking are not achieved consistently by all teachers.
- Teachers do not always plan work in lessons specifically enough to meet the needs of individuals or some groups of students.
- The governing body is still developing the ways it checks the effectiveness of the school's programmes to support those students who qualify for additional government funding.
- In spite of the school's best efforts, the progress of some students is affected by unauthorised absences during term time; this lowers overall attendance rates.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, including six which were seen jointly with members of the school’s leadership team. Twenty-six teachers were seen working with the students; this represented almost all the teachers working on the inspection days.
- In addition, a lesson was seen where Year 5 and 6 pupils visiting the school were being taught mathematics; this was part of the school’s partnership work with gifted and talented pupils. Daily form tutor time was observed and inspectors also attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of students selected at random by the lead inspector. These included those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with students. Inspectors heard a sample of students from Years 7 and 9 read.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, various monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, governing body documents, and information provided for families.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of department, class teachers, teaching assistants, the special educational needs coordinator, administrative staff and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with the school’s consultant improvement advisor.
- The inspectors took into consideration the 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The 50 responses to the questionnaire for school staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Catherine Robinson-Slater	Additional Inspector
Susan Tabberer	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Limehurst Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2011. It is not part of an academy chain. When its predecessor school, Limehurst High School, a middle deemed secondary school, was last inspected by Ofsted on 27–28 January 2010, it was judged to be outstanding.
- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school serving families mainly from the local Loughborough area. In May 2012, it was granted approval to become an 11 to 16 secondary school. It currently provides for students in Years 7 to 9. From September 2013, it is expanding its provision to include Year 10 students and from September 2014, Year 11 students. It is a specialist sports college.
- The school works closely with other schools through the North Charnwood Learning Partnership. The headteacher is currently chair of this group.
- The school works with the local authority youth service and a local charity, 'Twenty-Twenty', to provide occasional alternative provision for specific students who have challenges in their lives.
- Just over half of the students come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above average. Some 40% come from Asian or Asian British backgrounds, mainly from the local Bangladeshi community. The percentage known to speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- There are currently no year groups of students attending the school that are expected to meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the quality of students' learning, and the impact of teaching and assessment across the school by making sure that:
 - the marking of students' work, and written feedback, are focused specifically on helping them to remember and understand better what to improve
 - advice given through marking is always followed up to help create a dialogue with students about their work
 - lesson planning provides work that is matched closely enough to the needs of individuals as well as all groups of students.
- Build on the school's good partnership with parents and carers by ensuring fewer long-term absences during term time, therefore, promoting the value of continuous education.
- Develop the governance of the school by analysing more regularly the effectiveness of the school's programmes to support those students who qualify for additional government funding or who find learning more difficult.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the school in Year 7, their attainment is average. In terms of their overall points score (the measure by which all students are assessed nationally at the end of each stage of their education), they achieve well and make good progress while at the school.
- By the end of Key Stage 3 in summer 2012, the proportion of students gaining expected and higher levels in English and mathematics was better than the national average. The percentage gaining such levels in science was much higher than seen nationally.
- In preparation for becoming an 11 to 16 school, the school is checking the performance of its students across the range of English Baccalaureate subjects (English, mathematics, science, modern languages and humanities). Achievement is good overall for each year group.
- School data, from point scores, show that current Year 9 students have already made better progress than expected nationally across all five English Baccalaureate areas. This amounts to most students making around two terms better than expected progress. This is standing them in good stead for their future GCSE work.
- The work of the school in closing gaps in achievement between its various groups of students provides a good example of the effective ways it promotes equality of opportunity. The students themselves highlight their partnership with staff in tackling any potential discrimination.
- In 2012, the point score gap in attainment between those Year 9 students for whom the school received the pupil premium and other Year 9 students at the school was the equivalent of about a term in English and two terms in mathematics. This has now closed for the current Year 9. The gap is less than a term in English and very small in mathematics; a similar picture is seen in Years 7 and 8. The school is closing this gap steadily and effectively, and the progress of these students is as good as that of their classmates.
- The school's programmes to enable less-able students in Year 7 to 'catch up' and to challenge the more able are equally effective, and particularly good for the more-able in mathematics. Both groups in Year 7 make similar progress to their classmates.
- Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress, including those who join the school with little or no English. This is because the school focuses on literacy and communication skills across all subjects. It also makes accurate assessments of students' reading skills. There is a good focus on providing students with the necessary subject specialist vocabulary to help those who find reading more difficult.
- The school ensures particularly good support to ensure the progress of students who join or leave the school other than the normal time of entry at the start of Year 7 or transfer in Year 9. This includes support for refugees, asylum seekers, minority ethnic students and the children whose parents are studying temporarily at the local university.
- Supportive literacy work, involving sentence construction, the use of persuasive language and specialist vocabulary work, was seen being promoted to good effect in both form tutor time and personal development lessons. Year 9 students had great fun working together to find ways of using the word 'abominable' (the word for the week), and rose to the challenge of composing a 'Tweet' to advertise the school's sports facilities, and promote the school's sports specialism.

- The progress of any students attending alternative provision is checked weekly by the headteacher, and discussed with the students' mentor. There is also close liaison with the students' families. This provision makes a good contribution to students' personal development and supports their learning in school.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is overall in line with national expectations given their individual needs and difficulties. The progress of individual students is sometimes complicated by absences, while others make good or even outstanding individual progress. Where the school uses additional government funding to create smaller classes for those students who find learning more difficult, they make good progress.
- Outstanding progress was seen in a Year 8 humanities history lesson on the American civil war. Here, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was enhanced significantly through discussions which explored the issue of slavery and the feelings and beliefs of people at the time. The ability of students to understand and share the feelings of others was advanced.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Particularly outstanding teaching was seen in physical education lessons, demonstrating the effect of the school's sports specialist status. The lessons were not only planned well, but also offered high levels of challenge for the students, who were thoroughly engaged in activities at all times. Students were clearly used to taking part in coaching and evaluating each other's performance. Both teacher and students checked on progress and skills development throughout the lessons. Students were left in no doubt as to how to improve.
- Most teachers use questioning very effectively as a tool, not only to check on students' understanding but also to challenge them to explain their thinking and ideas. This is a particularly good feature of the teaching of both English and mathematics. As a result, students gain good levels of development in their critical, analytical and problem-solving skills.
- In a Year 9 English lesson, the teacher provided students with high levels of challenge to interpret one of Wilfrid Owen's war poems. A number found this difficult, but rose to the test as they understood the teacher's approach was giving them good experience of the GCSE work they will face in Year 10. This reflected the school's good preparation for future teaching in Key Stage 4.
- There are some weaknesses in the teaching, particularly when teachers are tempted to talk too much. This limits students' opportunities for taking a more active role in their own learning. Lesson planning always identifies particular groups, and sometimes individuals, who may need additional support in their learning. However, it is not always clear as to how focused and targeted work for such individuals and groups will enable them to make progress in lessons.
- The school itself recognises that marking is not always consistently helpful. Work to improve approaches to marking forms part of the school's improvement planning. Teachers almost always provide helpful spoken feedback to students in lessons. However, marking by a few teachers is not regular or helpful enough to remind students how and what to improve.
- Marking, as part of the dialogue between teachers and students, is not consistently followed up not only to support corrections and improvement, but also to support students when their memory of the teacher's spoken advice and guidance may have faded. A few books were seen

which had not been marked for several lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The ability of teachers to support students' learning is much enhanced by the excellent working relationships between staff and students. Most teachers have very high expectations of the students, who in turn enable teachers to give of their best. Students appreciate that their teachers have much to offer them, personally and in terms of care, as well as academically.
- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they waste no time in lessons. There is a consistent and sensitive approach to managing students' behaviour which ensures that staff have the highest expectations of the students. Consequently, students' moral appreciation, and their sense of right and wrong, is strong. Students take on readily any roles of responsibility and take pride in doing so.
- A further strength of the students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is that they feel free to express their thoughts and ideas, in any situation, without fear or favour. They know that their thinking will be given fair consideration by both teachers and other students. They say they appreciate the school community's multicultural nature because it gives them excellent opportunities to explore, consider and understand the beliefs of others.
- Students prove themselves to be responsible and open-minded young citizens who feel they have a contribution to make and know that their voice will be heard. There are high levels of respect between students. They feel entirely safe and secure while at school. They are active in their support for the school's 'zero tolerance' of bullying or racism, as shown by the school's records.
- The attendance of most students is above average. However, nationally published data on attendance shows it as below average overall. This is because of long-term unauthorised absences by students from a few families. The school works closely with these students' parents, and the local community at large, to promote an understanding of the importance of a continuous education on their children's progress.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is held in high regard by parents, not only because of the quality of education it provides, but also because of the work it undertakes with its community. Staff and leaders, at all levels, place a high priority on working in partnership with parents from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The school has a fine history of working closely with families to help them grow in confidence and develop the expertise to support their children's learning.
- The school's success results from many years of hard work and dedication. The headteacher, other senior leaders and heads of department set an admirable example in the ways they work alongside the staff and students. Consequently, a sense of teamwork is strong at the school. This is reflected in the students' approach to the concepts of sportsmanship and fair play.
- Effective leadership is also to be seen in the extent and success of the school's preparation to become an 11 to 16 school, and in the good quality of both its current Key Stage 3 and planned Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school provides a rich programme of opportunities outside lesson time. This is particularly strong for sport, but arts and other areas are well represented. Many

natural opportunities, such as the promotion of 'fair play' and the consideration of balanced arguments in class discussion and debate, are also taken through what is taught to promote very effectively the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- As an academy, the school employs its own school improvement consultant, and gains good value from this arrangement. The consultant helps advise it on a range of matters from the ways the headteacher and governing body check on the school's performance to joint lesson observations with senior leaders. A discussion with the consultant confirms there is a good understanding of the quality of teaching, and an effective approach to ensuring equality of opportunity for all students. The school shows good capacity for continued improvement.
- During the joint lessons observations, the senior leadership team assessed accurately the quality of teaching and learning. Discussions with staff show good levels of self-evaluation and self-criticism. This is reflected well through the setting of targets for teachers to improve their professional skills.
- Systems and processes for safeguarding students are fully in place. Any students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are given extensive support by well-trained staff and, through them, access to other, relevant professional agencies. The level of care for students at the school is high, and enabled through mutual trust and excellent working relationships.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed about the school's performance, not only through the headteacher's reports but also through visits where members check its work for themselves. These enable governors to make an important contribution to the school's everyday life and work. Governors are questioning as well as supportive. They are provided with an informative range of data by the headteacher which enables them to compare and contrast the school's performance with others nationally.
 - There are systematic checks on the effectiveness of teaching and teachers' performance management targets. Together with the senior leadership team, the governing body ensures such targets are linked directly to the quality of teaching and students' progress; in this, there are clear links to teachers' salary. Governors are clear about rewarding good teaching and a positive approach to professional development helps avoid underperformance.
 - The governing body knows how the pupil premium funding is allocated and produces a statement showing how it is spent. This additional government funding is being used mainly to finance a range of focused individual support for students. However, the governors interviewed accept that the governing body is not yet evaluating fully the effect of the pupil premium on students' progress. This is starting to be resolved through governing body action planning.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137367
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	413470

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Kilner
Headteacher	Jonathan Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01509 263444
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