

Lancasterian School

Elizabeth Slinger Road, West Didsbury, Manchester M20 2XA

Inspection dates

9–10 July 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The newly appointed headteacher, alongside her senior leaders and governors, has taken decisive action to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning, thrive and make good progress.
- The school has had a prolonged period of instability. However, it now has the firm foundations to continue on its journey of improvement.
- Pupils enjoy their time in the school. They build strong relationships with the staff, who have the skills, patience and care to ensure that all pupils are well cared for, safe and happy.
- In most classes, pupils are engaged and making good progress, because work is well matched to the needs of each individual pupil. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of national curriculum subjects and particularly enjoy mathematics, art and physical education. Assistive technology is used well, so that pupils can communicate, make choices and work independently. Improvements to the curriculum are planned for September to further expand the experiences for pupils of all abilities.
- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors have a clear direction and vision for further improvement. They are determined to achieve their ambition of providing the very best for the pupils of Lancasterian School. Governors and leaders recognise that they need to work even more with all stakeholders to share their vision and bring the Lancasterian community together again.
- The personal development of pupils is a priority and strength of the school. Staff encourage independence and allow all pupils to contribute to discussion and have a voice. Some pupils make exceptional progress in certain areas, such as using sign language or moving independently. However, this progress in personal development is not fully captured by leaders.
- Although whole-school attendance is gradually improving, there are too many children who have time off school for reasons other than illness. This leads to lost learning and slower progress.
- Children in the early years enjoy a bright and airy learning environment. They have access to their own large outdoor area with play equipment and accessible swings. Through fun play activities, children are learning and, in most cases, make very strong progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - implementing the planned curriculum model
 - engaging all stakeholders to strengthen the Lancasterian community ethos, vision and values.
- Ensure that all teachers use assessment information to plan the next steps in learning, so that the individual learning needs of each pupil are met.
- Capture the personal progress of pupils more effectively, so that improvements over time can be recorded and evaluated.
- Further reduce the unauthorised absence of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- After a period of turbulence and uncertainty, leaders have responded quickly and improved the financial stability of the school. The local authority has every confidence in the leadership team and in the school's capacity for further improvement. This confidence has been demonstrated through the additional funded places agreed with the local authority from September 2019.
- The new headteacher and her leadership team have worked quickly to establish an accurate self-evaluation of the current school position. They have a focused school development plan, with precise actions for further improvement. Leaders are ambitious and want the very best for every pupil in the school.
- The vast majority of staff enjoy working at the school. Staff talked about the warm and supportive relationships they have with each other and with the pupils. A minority of staff are less happy with the changes that have been implemented this academic year. However, the evidence from this inspection did not substantiate their concerns.
- Leaders have planned further improvements to the school curriculum. Through research, leaders have identified that some pupils will benefit from a curriculum that focuses in greater depth on communication and independence. Staff have worked with the curriculum lead to plan this in detail, so that learning is fun and engaging while widening pupils' experiences of the world. Leaders are ready to implement this new model in September 2019.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that immerse them in the music, food and religion of different cultures. For example, Eid was celebrated across the school with a big party involving food, music and dance. Pupils enjoy reflection time at the end of the day when quiet time allows pupils to think how they have helped and supported each other. Each class chooses a 'citizen of the week' and their achievement is celebrated in the weekly assembly.
- Equality is visible across the school. All pupils are included, and this is particularly strong in the student council. A representative from all classes attends and helps to shape improvements in the school. Pupils were able to communicate what they enjoyed doing in the school, their likes and dislikes. They spoke about how they had asked for the outside space known as 'the den' to be repaired, as it was becoming difficult for wheelchair users to access some spaces.
- The use of additional funding is well planned and effective. Funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used to provide targeted support in speech and language and in occupational therapy. Funding has also been used to enable a member of staff to work with families to remove barriers to education. A reading scheme introduced this year is also having a positive impact in improving pupils' spelling and reading skills. Because of the additional support, disadvantaged pupils are now making progress in line with, and in some cases stronger than, that of their peers.
- Sport premium funding has been used effectively to engage pupils in regular physical activity and encourage participation in sport. Pupils have attended wheelchair dancing

on a weekly basis and have also worked with other schools and entered competitions. As well as having fun, pupils have gained valuable skills in managing their wheelchairs. Other pupils have enjoyed cycling with adapted bikes in a local park. Swimming has also been a favourite of pupils who have attended swimming galas and multi-sports events across the city.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has strengthened its membership and skill set over the last two years. It now has the skills and expertise to continue to drive school improvement, alongside a passionate belief that the pupils in the school will have the best possible education.
- Governors know there is a lot of work to do. However, they also know that actions need time to embed so that improvements are sustainable. Their focus this year has been to concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and learning, so that more pupils are making good progress. They have had to undertake this in a climate where cuts were necessary to get the finances back under control. This has been achieved, and the school is now in a stable financial position.
- Governors and the local authority have supported the new headteacher and the leadership team this academic year, through brokering additional support and mentoring. This has had a strong impact. Leaders and governors have sharp and focused improvement plans that are already having a positive impact on teaching, learning, progress and behaviour.
- Training has sharpened governors' skills, so that governors are now able to drill down to the detail in reports, hold leaders rigorously to account and challenge decisions.
- The move to morning meetings for governors has resulted in improved attendance and given governors the opportunity to see the school in action, to visit classrooms and to talk to staff. Governors really know and understand the school well.
- The governor with responsibility for safeguarding has worked with the safeguarding team to ensure that the school site is safe at all times.
- Governors are aware that a small minority of staff and a handful of parents are anxious about the recent changes and their impact. They and leaders want to reach out to support all parents and carers and regain the trust and confidence of all parents, staff and stakeholders so that the school community can come together to work as a team to further improve the school for all pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The designated safeguarding lead has ensured that all recording and reporting systems are robust. Concerns, actions and outcomes are logged in detail. There are clear lines of accountability for any actions, which are followed up quickly by the appointed person.
- The early help lead works with families and external agencies so that barriers to attendance and education are removed.

- Annual training and regular updates keep staff up to date with any safeguarding information. The school has staff who are trained to deliver positive behaviour management and manual handling training. The school nurse trains targeted staff, so that any medical or feeding needs are met. A carefully planned induction programme ensures that newly employed staff have all the necessary training to be able to meet the safeguarding and welfare needs of all pupils. Some new staff who are starting the school this September have already completed some training.
- The staff know the pupils extremely well. They are quick to respond when there is an indication that pupils may be uncomfortable or need personal care. Staff are also quick to notice if any behaviour changes or emotional upset may be a cause for concern and act quickly to remedy the issue.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Where teachers have used assessment information carefully to plan activities that will meet pupils' learning needs, pupils are making very strong progress. For example, pupils in key stage 4 were all using a recent visit to Manchester to improve their English skills. All pupils were working at their own pace and in their own time. Some were working independently using their assistive technology to write an account of the day. Other pupils were working in small groups to spell key words using images from the trip as a prompt. Other pupils were constructing short sentences. All the group were engaged, motivated and making strong progress in their learning. However, this strong practice is not consistent across the school, and, in some classes, work is not well matched to pupils' needs.
- In some classes, it was evident how pupils' personal progress improves over time. Teachers used a game to reinforce the use of physical skills and communication. Pupils with complex needs used their assistive technology to take turns to give instructions, pass a soft brick, identify a colour, build a tower and decide when to knock it down. As well as developing communication, listening and physical skills, pupils were learning to work together and were clearly enjoying the game. The teachers' careful planning, alongside the opportunity for practice to embed and reinforce the learning, enabled the pupils to learn a whole range of personal and academic skills.
- The school's assessment system has been streamlined. Teachers are able to see pupils' individual progress towards their targets. Where teachers have used assessment carefully to plan next steps in learning, pupils' learning records show pupils are making strong progress. However, in a minority of cases, assessment had not been used carefully to plan next steps and progress was weaker.
- Where pupils are identified as not making the progress the school expects, leaders and teachers identify support that will help the pupil to move on in their learning. This may be in physical skills, communication, number or word skills, and is personalised to each pupil's needs. Case studies show that pupils have made strong progress through this targeted approach.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together. There is a partnership approach in each class, and staff know each pupil's individual needs very

well. Staff use a number of communication methods, including signing, visual symbols, assistive technology and verbal language. They are skilled in supporting pupils to be independent and have a voice. Staff persevere with encouragement, so that pupils are not rushed but have the time to respond to questions, have a say and feel a valued member of the school community.

- Teachers have high aspirations for what pupils can learn and achieve. Pupils enter the school at any age, and some pupils have not previously attended any education. The school also has a high proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. Staff use a range of observations and assessment alongside the education, health and care plan to set aspirational yet achievable targets. Case studies and work scrutiny show that pupils settle quickly into school life. Some pupils make remarkable progress very quickly from their starting points. This was also confirmed in discussions with some parents.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils who are transported to school arrive happy and often laughing due to the warm relationships they have built with their transport assistants. This positive start to the day continues, with pupils sharing lots of laughter and fun with their peers and other staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and supportive. Staff know the needs of every pupil very well. They demonstrate great care for all the pupils and are quick to intervene if any pupils need personal care or emotional support.
- Independence is promoted through all school activities. Weekly classes support pupils to use their wheelchairs safely and independently. Pupils gain certificates as they develop more independence and competency in using their wheelchair. Pupils were able to explain how they are careful in the street and how they need to look out for potholes. Teachers plan activities to develop independence skills; for example, some pupils in key stage 4 travelled by tram into the city to enjoy a game of bowling and some lunch.
- Leaders look for projects and experiences that will allow pupils to develop personal skills in an innovative way. For example, through a digital media and enterprise project, some pupils have rejuvenated the school café. They explained how they surveyed staff and pupils for their views on the café. They then used digital media to record the research and subsequent changes as well as to advertise the new café. They now have home-baked cakes and a simpler payment method, which have resulted in a successful weekly café.
- Home-to-school books are used daily. Open communication between parents and staff ensures that any welfare, care or behaviour concerns are shared. Staff are vigilant and responsive to pupils' personal care needs, so that pupils remain comfortable throughout the day.
- Pupils explained how they keep themselves safe, especially online. Pupils were able to say how they do not give out any personal information including names, school, addresses or ages. They were also able to talk about being out in the community and

how to make sure of getting on the right bus.

- A well-structured careers, information, advice and guidance programme works to build pupils' skills and knowledge around the world of work. Pupils have opportunities for work placements, both in the school and externally. The offer is personalised to meet the aspirations of each pupil. Pupils have completed work experience in retail, catering, volunteering and media placements. Pupils keep records of their placements and the folders show the development of work and personal skills over time. This structured careers' programme is also linked to the personal, social and health curriculum. Pupils learn about meaningful work, alongside the health and well-being benefits of working.
- Across all areas of the school, personal development is strong, and pupils are making strong progress in a whole range of personal skills, including confidence, communication, physical skills and independence. However, this strong progress is not being captured effectively by leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have implemented a new behaviour policy that reflects the views of pupils and staff. It contains a code of conduct, using appropriate language and vocabulary for pupils of different needs and ages.
- Staff record any behaviour concerns through the school's recording system. This information is used by leaders and staff to identify what support or changes may be needed to help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. This personalised approach is effective. Incidents for individual pupils reduce over time, as they are supported and barriers to learning are removed.
- Leaders have been taking a more rigorous approach to tackling absence from the school. A number of measures have been introduced to reduce unauthorised absence. These include supporting families to remove barriers to attendance, alongside a stricter policy on holidays taken in term time. Although the recent changes are showing some improvements in absence levels, unauthorised absence remains higher than at similar schools nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders ensure that all pupils leaving key stage 4 have the opportunity to gain nationally recognised qualifications. This academic year, pupils in key stage 4 have achieved the ASDAN personal progress award and the ASDAN transition challenge. The most able pupils have also gained functional skills entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Pupils leaving school at the end of key stage 4 have also achieved their Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Pupils leaving key stage 4 move on to a positive sixth-form destination. This could be a specialist provision or provision within a mainstream sixth-form college. Staff work closely with families to look at available options. They support visits to potential providers to help families and pupils to make informed choices and be ready for their next step in education.

- The majority of pupils in the primary school are meeting or exceeding their targets for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education is similar to or better than other pupils in the school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children arrive in the early years at a stage of development well below that typical for their age. Staff use the Government's early years framework to assess each child's starting point. Progress records show that children are making strong progress from very low starting points.
- The environment is large, bright and welcoming. There is a large dedicated and secure outdoor area, with adapted swings and play equipment. The indoor area provides a wide range of appropriate resources, including a sensory room. The classrooms are well resourced, attractive and stimulating.
- There is a high staff-to-pupil ratio. Children are very well cared for and staff are highly focused on developing behaviours for learning, communication and language skills. Case studies and learning records show that some children are making very strong progress against their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets.
- The headteacher is the lead for the early years provision. All school policies and procedures are inclusive of the early years. Welfare requirements are met, and staff have all the required safeguarding, manual handling and first-aid training.
- The learning records are detailed, with lively photographic, video and witness statements to show how children are developing. This detailed record enables parents to see the steps of progress being made by their children.
- Staff are skilled at engaging children in learning through play. In sessions seen, staff encouraged eye contact, speech and physical activities. They used language carefully, with lots of simple words and repetition, so children were not overwhelmed with too much information.
- The use of shared spaces with Year 1 and 2 pupils helps children to be ready to move into the next phase of education. They share lunch together and join in whole-school activities such as sports day. Consequently, they are comfortable and familiar with their environment when they move into Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	105608
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10087710

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Worrall
Headteacher	Alison Randall
Telephone number	0161 445 0123
Website	www.lancasterian.manchester.co.uk
Email address	a.randall@lancasterian.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2018

Information about this school

- All pupils have an (EHC) plan. Pupils' special educational needs vary and include visual impairment; hearing impairment; speech, language and communication; social, emotional and mental health; multi-sensory impairment; physical disability; moderate learning difficulty; severe learning difficulty; and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Two thirds of pupils are eligible for free school meals.
- Boys considerably outnumber girls.
- The school has a high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes. They observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors also assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' progress files, their EHC plan, evidence captured by photographs and videos of pupils' progress, as well as work in books and the school's own assessment information.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors spoke to safeguarding leads, curriculum leads, and attendance and behaviour leads.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. An inspector also met with a group of parents.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. However, inspectors met formally with the student council and talked informally to pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, met formally with several groups of staff and spoke to staff throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: minutes of governing body meetings; information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan; behaviour and attendance records; and information relating to safeguarding, including the single central record.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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