



Lord Lawson of Beamish Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 108403
Local Authority Gateshead
Inspection number 288091
Inspection dates 19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs June Tracey

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

Type of School	Secondary	School address	Birtley Lane
School category	Community		Birtley
Age range of pupils	11-18		Chester le Street
			County Durham
			DH3 2LP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4334026
Number on roll (school)	1,500	Fax number	0191 4334026
Number on roll (6 th form)	240		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Albert Leaf
Date of previous school inspection	September 2002	Headteacher	Mr David Grigg

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
11-18	19 October 2006	288091

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lord Lawson of Beamish is a specialist arts college and Leading Edge school. Most of the students come from the Birtley area of Gateshead. The school is larger than the average comprehensive school. It has a large and expanding sixth form. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very few students have English as an additional language. A new school is currently under construction alongside the present school. Attainment on entry is average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lord Lawson provides an outstanding education for all its students. Leadership is entrepreneurial and invigorating. All staff, parents and students contribute to self-critical evaluation of the school's work, which precipitates action and spearheads improvement. The incessant and unceasing drive for excellence comes from all involved in the life of the school, whether it is members of the school council discussing the quality of the school meals with Gateshead Authority or the headteacher driving forward the new school building programme. This is a school that inspires staff and students to take risks and aim high. It is not afraid to take up new initiatives and challenges. The school is highly valued by parents who say it is 'very good in every way'. It is at the leading edge of education. For example, it is deeply involved in piloting work with the local authority and central government. Its development of personalised learning and individual programmes of study is a model of good practice. The specialist status of the school as an Arts College and the outstanding partnerships with other providers enrich the curriculum and provide students with many opportunities to extend their learning.

Students enjoy learning and make excellent progress overall to reach above average standards in Key Stage 3 and well above average standards in Key Stage 4. This is largely due to the rigorous approach the school takes to observing, coaching and supporting teachers to ensure that the students receive the best possible learning experiences. Students are full partners in this learning. There is room for further improvement, however, in English and mathematics at GCSE.

Parents are impressed with Lord Lawson; one said, 'My child's confidence has gone from strength to strength'. Students attend regularly because they feel valued and listened to. They strive to do well and, for most, enjoyment and learning are synonymous. The curriculum is very well tailored to meet students' individual needs. The progression through from 14 to 19 is seamless; the provision engages students in mapping out their own future. This is matched by excellent arrangements for transfer to the school at the age of 11. The deployment of a member of staff to teach in the primary sector in Year 6 and in Year 7 at Lord Lawson contributes to progression in learning and is reassuring for students when they change schools.

Care, guidance and support for individual students are exceptionally well catered for by the House system, which is exceptional. Students belonging to the same family share the same pastoral environment which improves communications between home and school. This is a school that knows itself very well and uses its resources to maximum advantage. Poor accommodation has not been allowed to be a barrier to learning. Students and staff are looking forward with eager anticipation to occupation of the brand new school that is currently under construction on the adjoining site. The school has made very

good improvement since the previous inspection and there is excellent capacity for more.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are very effective in providing for the specific needs of every learner. A very wide range of academic and vocational courses is on offer. Overall, learners' performance is above average; in some academic subjects it is well above average. Learners achieve very well. They buzz with enthusiasm about their work and their roles in school. The 'Seven to Twelve Original Mentoring Programme' is a typical example of the way some sixth formers help younger students by mentoring and helping those who need extra time to practise numeracy and literacy skills. One of the sixth formers said, 'The training taught me how to help others to learn; the experience has given me an opportunity to give something back to the school.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English and mathematics at GCSE.

Achievement and standards **Grade: 1**

The standards of work seen during the inspection, substantiated by very detailed assessment records, are mirrored in students' results in external tests and examinations. Overall, GCSE results have been significantly above average compared with other schools for the last five years, which indicates how much the school is adding to students' achievement from their average starting point on entry in Year 7. Results were slightly lower in English and mathematics compared with other subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to other students. Male and female students achieve equally well.

Personal Development and well-being **Grade: 1**

Personal development, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Students arrive at school each day wanting to learn. They are studious, well focused and motivated. By the time they are 16, they are mature, articulate and confident young people, well aware of how to stay healthy and safe and progressively gaining the skills necessary for the world of work and adult life. The school and house councils provide very good platforms for students to learn about democracy and how constructive debate and consideration of all points of view; moral, social and financial, affect

decisions. The leadership of the school values these contributions and considers students as 'critical friends'. For example, in response to comments that some low level disruption hindered learning in a few classes, students helped to devise a Behaviour for Learning policy that other students saw as being systematic and fair. Attendance is average, with unauthorised attendance significantly lower than the national figure.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Students are aware of how they learn and can talk about the methods that suit them best. They expect to be challenged, and are. In return, they produce high quality work. It is this purposeful approach that underpins lessons. Teachers' good subject knowledge, rigorous assessment and meticulous planning are the keys to the successful teaching, such as that seen in an outstanding dance lesson in Year 11 where students constructively assessed their own and others' performance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is wide ranging and highly effective. Consequently, motivation and enthusiasm are high. Students are confident in their courses because they receive excellent guidance and support and have the opportunity to sample some elements before choosing. The on-site provision of vocational courses such as hairdressing, plumbing, electrical work and child care is exceptional. The impact of Performing Arts status is obvious throughout the curriculum. Students have many opportunities to perform at a high level, for example, at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle. They eagerly take up the huge range of enrichment activities, some of which use the on-site Health Unit as a resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are excellent. The family ethos that emanates from the house system permeates the work of the whole school. As a result, students' work is closely monitored and guided; targets are constantly reviewed to provide sufficient but not overwhelming challenge. The school takes its legal duties of care very seriously. Child protection procedures are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership, management and governance are highly effective. Together they ensure that the personal development of every individual, student or adult, is at

the heart of the school's work. This gives a clear signal to everyone that they are truly valued. The school evaluates its work rigorously and is quick to take effective action if it perceives an area to develop. Its systems are coherent and carefully meshed together. The adults in school have intertwining roles that draw students into a supportive network that bolsters confidence and self-esteem.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	N/A	
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	N/A	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Lord Lawson of Beamish Community School
Birtley Lane
Birtley
Chester le Street
County Durham
DH3 2LP



19 October 2006

Dear Students

We recently visited your school in order to find out how well you are doing and how well your school is supporting you in your personal and academic development. We appreciated the very friendly welcome you extended to us and would particularly like to thank those of you who took the time to speak to us. We found you to be mature, confident and articulate young people ready to take responsibility. You were overwhelmingly positive about your school and said you thoroughly enjoyed being there. Your parents were also keen to tell us that they are 'very impressed' with the school.

You will be pleased to know that we think your school is outstanding. You make very good progress and many of you reach standards well above average by the time you leave. You do particularly well in a range of GCSE and vocational courses, but there is still room for some improvement in mathematics and English at GCSE. The large numbers of you who continue to study the vast range of courses in the sixth form also do very well. Many of you obtain standards at advanced level which are well above those achieved in other schools.

These high standards are the result of outstanding teaching and your high level of commitment and involvement in the management of your own learning. You clearly understand what you are aiming for and what you need to do in order to achieve your goals. This is because the care, guidance and support that you receive are excellent.

Your school's specialist status has been a big advantage to you. The many outstanding partnerships have helped to give you an excellent range of vocational and workplace learning opportunities. Your school council and house council are doing sterling work on your behalf, making many positive changes in your school. Some of you told us how you were benefiting from the new 'Behaviour for Learning' policy because your lessons were no longer disrupted by silly behaviour.

We wish you all the best for your futures and hope you all enjoy your new school building when it becomes ready for occupation next year.

Yours sincerely

June Tracey and Mary Sewell
Inspectors