

Lord's Independent School

Enterprise House, 340 Chorley Old Road, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 4JU

Inspection dates

14–16 March 2017

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| 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 |
| Sixth form provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a dynamic and responsive school, where the principal works tirelessly to ensure that pupils are safe, well cared for and progressing well.
- Since the previous inspection, the intake of pupils has changed significantly. A higher proportion of pupils than previously have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are catered for exceptionally well.
- All pupils make at least good progress from their different starting points. They attain well in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, history, physics and art.
- At the end of Year 11 in 2016, all pupils gained at least five GCSE qualifications, including in English and mathematics at grades A* to C. Several pupils in Year 10 have already gained GCSE qualifications.
- The quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, is good. Teachers plan activities which engage and interest pupils.
- Teachers' feedback does not regularly and consistently help pupils to improve their work.
- Effective leadership by the principal has ensured that the good quality of teaching and good outcomes for pupils have been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Systems for monitoring staff performance and for recording and acting on pupils' progress are not robust enough to secure outstanding outcomes.
- The school has a very positive reputation among parents and carers who say that pupils' behaviour and progress are good.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Typically, pupils indicate that they 'love Lord's because you can easily make friends', and say that the school is 'small and safe'.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils take care of each other and are respectful of each other's cultural differences.
- Currently, there are few opportunities for teachers to learn from effective practice in other settings.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - formalising arrangements to manage the performance of staff
 - tightening existing systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
 - providing opportunities for staff to learn from best practice in other educational settings
 - ensuring that teachers consistently apply the school's assessment and feedback policy, and regularly indicate to pupils how they can take the next steps in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The quality of leadership is good and has been sustained since the previous inspection. The principal is unfaltering in her aim to ensure that pupils enjoy school and make good progress. This they do. The principal, also the proprietor and the main key stage 2 teachers, ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- The school follows its vision, 'to provide a place where pupils can flourish, grow in confidence and remain safe as they fulfil their potential'. Places at Lord's School are offered not only based on academic ability but also on need. For example, the principal adheres to the school's admissions policy and provides assisted places for pupils whose parents may be struggling financially.
- Exceptional commitment and versatility enable the principal, deputy principal, teachers and teaching assistants to successfully manage, and cater for, pupils with a wide range of educational, social and emotional needs. In addition, the school provides exceptionally well for an increasing number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effective leadership of the principal ensures that the school is a harmonious and purposeful place where pupils care about each other, respect each other's differences and value learning.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and wide-ranging curriculum, through which learning is personalised to meet the needs of the individual. For such a small school, an unusually extensive range of subjects are offered.
- Pupils develop well their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, while pursuing their own learning interests. This ensures that pupils, and learners in the sixth form, are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their learning after leaving school.
- All staff who completed the inspection questionnaire were highly positive about the school, indicating that they enjoy their work and are proud to work there. Teachers who spoke with the inspector said they feel well supported and that professional development opportunities are helping to improve their practice.
- Teachers are especially appreciative of recent training in autism and dyslexia, which they say has enabled them to plan learning activities more effectively for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, few opportunities are available for teachers to learn from effective practice in other educational settings.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of British values, is good. The provision is effective in developing pupils' appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society and their familiarity with major world faiths. Pupils enjoy raising funds for various charities and have empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils enjoy drama and visiting museums and local places of interest. Many are 'budding' musicians. All pupils enjoy learning to play the wide range of percussion, string and keyboard instruments available to them.

- Pupils know their rights and are skilled at putting democratic principles into practice. This was evident when they discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the recent American presidential election, and considered the consequences of Great Britain remaining in, or leaving, the European Union.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about the school, which they say has an 'open door' policy. All parents who spoke with the inspector had a story to tell about their children's dissatisfaction, or problems, with their previous school. Without reservation, parents were of the view that Lord's is an excellent school that serves the needs of their children exceptionally well.
- The principal monitors the quality of teaching through regular observations of teachers' practice. However, advice to teachers on how they can improve is not as tightly focused as it could be. In addition, the quality of feedback that teachers give to pupils on their work is infrequently assessed.
- Inspection evidence indicates that teachers' adherence to the school's feedback and assessment policy is inconsistent. Teachers do not consistently indicate clearly enough what pupils need to do to improve their learning.
- Procedures for setting targets for staff, and assessing their performance in relation to them, are informal. There are few written records to indicate that staff are challenged to continually improve. The principal is aware of the need to formalise arrangements in this area. In addition, she is committed to enabling teachers to learn from best practice in other settings. The principal aims to take full advantage of recent partnerships developed with local schools to further enhance teachers' performance.
- The school's website meets the independent school standards which set out the requirements for the publication of information on schools' websites. It contains up-to-date policies with regard to safeguarding, complaints and behaviour.

Governance

- The principal is also the proprietor and teaches the key stage 2 class. In addition, she is responsible for liaising with parents, local authorities and special educational needs support services. The principal is solely responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching and is the designated safeguarding lead. The principal is solely accountable for the school. However, no procedures are in place to monitor the principal's performance and there is no one for her to 'touch base' with.
- The local authority recently carried out a half-day assessment of the school, focusing on the suitability of the premises and aspects of the quality of educational provision and leadership. The principal is planning to build on this relationship to gain an external perspective on how well the school is performing.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All necessary checks are carried out to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. All staff are trained to identify safeguarding matters and respond to pupils' concerns. Staff are familiar with the school's safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, as well as with the most recent government guidance on keeping children safe in education.

- Leaders work in partnership with social, health and family services practitioners. This ensures that staff have a well-informed view of any problems or challenges facing pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are trained well and enjoy their work. They are enthusiastic about working with a wide age range of pupils and are receptive to continuous professional development.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have settled into school life well. Teachers help them to overcome any learning difficulties they may have and quickly develop their eagerness to learn. This was evident in a class where pupils were using a software package to create short quizzes to test the knowledge of their peers later in the week. Pupils skilfully manipulated texts and images to generate information about cars, fast and strong animals, football players and aeroplanes. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed their learning and demonstrated their good skills in using computers and handling information.
- In all lessons, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are well motivated and attentive. In mathematics in key stage 2, teachers rightly focus on ensuring that pupils catch up on missed or insecure learning by developing pupils' familiarity with basic operations and the application of their skills to problem-solving activities. In English, teachers focus on improving pupils' reading skills, the quality of their writing and the accuracy of their grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Sometimes classes are comprised of key stages 2, 3 and 4 pupils, as was the case in a drama lesson where pupils were enacting a scene from 'The ghost on the moor'. Pupils listened attentively as their peers used excellent expression to read their scripts. The teacher's praise, given to pupils for their effective character portrayals, strengthened pupils' resolve to continue to refine their performances.
- Science teaching is good. This was exemplified in a key stage 3 class, where pupils were learning about the characteristics of sound waves. Pupils showed that they were used to participating in physics lessons as they helped the teacher demonstrate the pattern made by sound waves by holding the one end of a long, flexible metal spring while the teacher flicked the other end to create an undulating motion. This generated a lot of excitement and questions, to which the teacher responded with useful feedback, and stimulated discussion around the importance of practical experiments.
- Teachers' work to develop pupils' appreciation of poetry and well-known British writers, including Shakespeare, is highly effective. Pupils' recorded work shows they are familiar with the work of the war poets, romantic writers and modern poets. Teachers rightly provide as many opportunities as possible for pupils to read, and praise them for their efforts in interpreting the text. This was demonstrated in a key stage 4 English literature class where pupils read and considered the motivations of Friar Lawrence and Paris in 'Romeo and Juliet'.

- Although most pupils' books are assessed regularly, not all teachers adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy. For example, there are few instances of teachers providing pupils with information on how they can take the next steps in their learning, an integral part of the school's policy. As a result, too few pupils can say what they need to do to improve their work in subjects such as English, mathematics and science.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Lord's pupils are very thoughtful and reflective. Those with moderate learning difficulties have an insight into their learning and social challenges. The therapeutic, emotional, health and social aspects of the curriculum help pupils to develop into well-rounded citizens with a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy mind and body.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils say that they feel safe at school. They indicate that they are well looked after and confident to approach any member of staff if they have a concern.
- A sizeable minority of pupils have been bullied at their previous schools. They informed the inspector that they were anxious about starting at Lord's School. However, without reservation, all such pupils stated that they found the school to be friendly and welcoming. Similarly, those pupils who have previously been home-schooled indicated that they made friends on the first day at school and that they 'need not have been worried'.
- Typically, pupils describe the school as a unique place where everyone gets on and 'people look after each other'. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that bullying rarely, if ever, happens and that the school has a 'zero tolerance' of bullying. The school's well-documented records indicate that this is indeed the case.
- Pupils have a good understanding of prejudice-based bullying. They say that racism is 'when you make fun of someone because of their race, religion, colour, language or country of origin'. Pupils are adamant that racism does not take place in school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of cyber bullying, which they know can take place in any form of social media and on mobile phones. They advise that 'you should block people you don't know', and 'never share pictures that you would not share with your family'.
- Pupils learn about the harmful effects of illegal drugs, smoking and drinking alcohol. All pupils participate in weekly martial arts activities. They keep themselves fit when playing in the small yard at the back of the school. In addition, there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take advantage of two local parks with facilities which include tennis, golf, football, outdoor gymnastics, basketball and badminton.
- In exceptional cases, the principal has had to permanently exclude pupils. Decisions were not made lightly and were taken to ensure the safety of all pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents and carers who spoke with the inspector were of the view that pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Typical comments were 'I couldn't fault it' and 'my child has never been happier'. Similarly, a representative from a placing authority, and another from Bolton special educational needs support service, said that behaviour at the school is good.
- Pupils who spoke with the inspector indicated that behaviour is good. They commented that occasionally there are 'fall outs' but these are quickly sorted out. Inspection evidence, including the school's behaviour records, indicate that behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils at Lord's are very friendly and welcoming towards visitors. They enjoy learning and behave well in class. Pupils are eager to share their ideas. Key stage 2 pupils, and those new to the school, are growing in confidence when speaking and reading in class.
- All pupils follow the rules and say they enjoy the instant rewards, items from the tuck shop, that they can gain through good behaviour and good learning in class.
- Pupils behave sensibly at all times, including during lunch and break times and when moving around the school. They are courteous and respectful towards adults.
- Pupils are good ambassadors for the school. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as showing visitors and new pupils around the school, and like to air their views and discuss topical issues.
- Pupils attend school regularly. The school's comprehensive attendance data and registers show that attendance is good across all key stages, including for those pupils previously home-schooled and those who have spent extended periods of time not in education.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their different starting points on entry to the school, pupils achieve well. This includes academic learners who started the school in Year 12 in 2016, pupils who have attended the school throughout key stages 3 and 4, and pupils in key stage 2.
- Individual learning programmes and good-quality teaching ensure that all pupils make at least good progress in a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders' analysis of pupils' performance at the end of Year 11 in 2016 shows that all groups of pupils made at least good progress, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity or whether they had special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- In January 2016, all Year 11 pupils secured passes in English and mathematics, mainly at grade B. Pupils improved their performance in June 2016 and passed at least five subjects, including mathematics and English, securing even higher grades.
- In 2015, Lord's School won the Good Schools Guide Award for pupils' GCSE performance in science 'for out-performing all other English schools in its category or displaying excellent performance'.

- Pupils' reading skills are good. Key stage 2 pupils who read for the inspector, including those who found reading difficult, read clearly and with good diction. Pupils regularly read in class and have many opportunities to widen their reading repertoire, given the extensive books and reading materials available. Pupils' knowledge of different writers and genres is developing in key stage 2 and is well developed in key stages 3 and 4.
- Excellent opportunities are available for pupils to play different musical instruments. The most able pupils are familiar with tablature (a form of musical notation mainly for guitars). They can play an array of chords and produce their own compositions. All pupils are encouraged to 'have a go' and express their creativity. This ensures their engagement and good progress in this subject.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for by teachers and teaching assistants who have a good knowledge of the barriers that some pupils face in learning. Teachers know how individual pupils prefer to learn. This ensures pupils' rapid progress in all subjects, often from very low starting points. Similarly, teachers' work is effective in ensuring the good progress of least-able pupils and those who need to catch up to their peers.
- The most able learners are well supported with their A-level work in mathematics, psychology, biology, chemistry, physics and computer science, by experienced teachers. Similarly, excellent support, including one-to-one tuition, is available for pupils taking GCSE examinations in history, English literature and astronomy. In January 2017, several pupils in Years 10 and 11 secured good GCSE grades in English and mathematics. All pupils intend to improve their grades and retake their examinations.
- Effective art teaching inspires pupils to produce high-quality art work as shown in pupils' portrait work, pottery and papier-mâché mask-making.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The prospectus for the sixth form states that 'We believe that small classes and high quality teaching are the key to success. This approach is very personal and means that learners are focused on their studies and are given lots of attention from teachers to maximise attainment and fulfil potential.' This approach is reaping rewards for Year 13 students.
- All sixth form students met with the inspector. All were highly positive about their experience in the sixth form, having left their previous school at the end of Year 12 to continue their studies at Lord's. During the inspection, students were engaged in revision and private study activities in preparation for their examinations.
- All aspects of the sixth form provision, including leadership and management, teaching, outcomes for pupils, and careers advice and guidance, are good. Students said that they are well supported in their studies and teaching is good.

- All sixth form students follow a similar curriculum which includes chemistry, biology, physics, mathematics, computer science and psychology. All aspire to go to medical school. Students' work is regularly and accurately assessed, with good advice given on how they can improve their work. Opportunities are available for students to study previous examination papers. Students benefit from high-quality impartial careers guidance. Such guidance prepares them well for their chosen next steps. For example, it enabled students to make well-informed decisions when making their recent applications to medical schools. In addition, students said that they were well supported when compiling their personal statements and applications to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).
- Students who spoke with the inspector said that they get extra homework and are always pushed to achieve their best. This, they indicated, has given them confidence to attain the high A-level grades they need to secure a place at their chosen universities.
- Students have no concerns about behaviour which they said is good. They said that they feel safe. They are highly respectful and know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Students said that they enjoy working together in a small group. This enables their teachers to plan and manage individual programmes of study that build on students' prior attainment and prepare them well for future employment.
- Inspection evidence indicates that the school's work to support students' personal development and welfare is good. When asked if any aspects of the sixth form could be improved, students said they would like more learning and revision time. The principal is planning to intensify students' revision time at the start of the summer term to ensure that they are well prepared for their forthcoming A-level examinations.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 105269 |
| DfE registration number | 350/6000 |
| Inspection number | 10012840 |

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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| Type of school | Other independent school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 7–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 29 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 3 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Enterprise Education (Bolton) Ltd |
| Principal | Anne Ainsworth |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £4,200–£6,600 |
| Telephone number | 01204 523 731 |
| Website | www.lordsschool.co.uk |
| Email address | info@lordsschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 1–2 November 2012 |

Information about this school

- At the start of the inspection, the school did not meet all statutory requirements or independent school standards. Unmet requirements related to the school's complaints and safeguarding policies and the publication of specified information on its website. All requirements were met by the end of the inspection.

- Lord's School is a co-educational independent school for pupils aged from seven to 18. At the time of the inspection, a small number of pupils were studying for their A-level qualifications.
- The school is located on the outskirts of Bolton. It was founded as a commercial college in 1906 and became a secondary school in 1975. The school has been owned by Enterprise Education (Bolton) Ltd since December 2014. The school's main aim is to 'provide a place where pupils can flourish, grow in confidence and remain safe as they fulfil their potential, gain their qualifications and develop socially'.
- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of abilities, including a growing number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small proportion of pupils have education, health and care plans or a statement of special educational needs.
- Approximately one third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. These pupils are mainly of Indian and Pakistani heritage. Broadly the same proportion speak English as an additional language.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has moved to new premises. On 16 April 2014, the Department for Education granted the school a material change, allowing it to provide up to 80 places for pupils from age seven to 18. Previously, the minimum age of pupils was 11 years.
- Pupils mainly learn in one of four classes. These are for key stages 2, 3 and 4 pupils. There is also a sixth form class for Year 13 students. Key stages 2, 3 and 4 pupils come together for some aspects of the curriculum, including martial arts and drama.
- The school offers a wide range of subjects at GCSE level and follows the international GCSE curriculum for all. A range of A levels are offered to a small group of sixth form students in Year 13.
- The school is led and managed by the principal, who is also the key stage 2 teacher and the proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils in various lessons, including English, mathematics, astronomy, physics, information technology and history.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately. Meetings were held with the principal and various members of the teaching staff.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered. The inspector scrutinised responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by seven members of staff. The inspector also read 11 letters written by pupils during the inspection. The inspector met with five parents and carers during the inspection.
- Telephone discussions were held with a representative of a placing authority, Bolton local authority, and with a representative of Bolton's special educational needs service.
- The inspector listened to key stage 2 pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school.
- The inspector examined a range of documents. These included various safety and safeguarding policies and procedures, including the school's single central register, records of pupils' attendance, development plans, records of monitoring the quality of teaching and logs of pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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