

The Latimer Arts College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	122066
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380396
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	1103
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Wood
Headteacher	Siobhan Hearne
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2010
School address	Castle Way Barton Seagrave Kettering NN15 6SW
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	18–19 January 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Dilip Kadodwala

Her Majesty's Inspector

Allison Dawes

Additional inspector

Beverley Mabey

Additional inspector

Robert Parkin

Additional inspector

Catherine Stormonth

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed 36 lessons taught by 36 teachers, of which four were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. They also sat in on three tutor groups and two assemblies. Inspectors carried out brief visits to a series of other lessons and held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of students, and two members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the college's work and looked at the tracking of students' progress, performance data, students' work, whole-college and subject - development plans, numerous policies, incident logs, and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 319 parents and carers, 124 students and 65 staff were received and analysed.

Information about the school

This college is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Very few are from ethnic minority heritages. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils who are identified as being disabled or having special educational needs is well below average, including those who have a statement of special educational needs. The college meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. When the college was last inspected in November 2010, it was given a notice to improve. The college has had a specialism in the performing arts since 1997.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the college no longer requires significant improvement.
- The college provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has improved well in the last year, reflecting the relentless efforts being made by the principal and her senior leaders to drive up standards. GCSE results are now significantly above average. The sixth form is satisfactory.
- Achievement is satisfactory, including in the sixth form, from students' average starting points. This is an improvement from previous years when students' progress was inadequate, particularly in English and science. In modern foreign languages, standards are below average and achievement is inadequate.
- Teaching has improved from being inadequate at the last inspection to being satisfactory now. Whilst improving, good or better teaching is not embedded across the whole college to enable all groups of students to make better than satisfactory progress. Support provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs ensures they make satisfactory progress.
- Students' satisfactory behaviour and punctuality contribute to their learning and to an orderly college environment. The large majority of students behave well most of the time. There are clear expectations and these are mostly consistently applied. Occasionally, a small minority of students interrupt learning in weakly taught lessons, especially those taught by temporary teachers. Students conduct themselves responsibly around the college, helping to ensure that students feel safe. Behaviour in the sixth form is good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory and not yet good because students' high standards are recent gains and the level of students' progress is not yet better than satisfactory. However, the college is improving quickly

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because of senior leaders' accurate and incisive self-evaluation, underpinned by decisive and timely actions. The effectiveness of engaging parents and carers in supporting students' achievement is underdeveloped.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement to at least good through ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - providing more challenging tasks to secure students' active engagement in learning
 - providing more opportunities for students to demonstrate independent learning
 - ensuring that there is consistency in the marking of students' work so that they all know how to improve and advice is routinely followed up by the teachers
 - ensuring that the best practice in teaching and the effective management of behaviour in lessons is disseminated more widely across the college.
- Raise students' attainment in modern foreign languages and improve their progress by the end of Year 11.
- Improve the engagement of parents and carers in their children's learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' performance at GCSE has improved over the last two years. In 2011, the proportion of students who gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics was significantly above average. The college's own reliable data indicates that this improving trend is set to continue. Parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire commented that their children are given opportunities to reach their full potential. The majority indicate that their children are now making good progress, views generally supported by inspection evidence.

Over time, students' progress is satisfactory. It is improving, having previously been inadequate by the end of Year 11 in English, science and modern foreign languages. Robust tracking of students' progress and improvements in teaching are ensuring that underachievement is tackled and corrected quickly. Lessons observed in French, for example, show that students are making the expected progress. However, standards in this subject remain below average by the end of Year 11. Assessment

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data in Years 10 and 11 in English and science shows that students are well on the way to securing satisfactory progress. Senior leaders have set ambitious but realistic targets to raise achievement even higher.

Assessment information and meticulous tracking of individual students ensures that teachers are able to support students who are at risk of underachieving. This year, a group of boys are taught as a separate class in English to help raise their achievement. Currently, they are making at least satisfactory progress. Disabled students are given every opportunity to do well and they make satisfactory progress. The small number of students with a range of special educational needs are given suitable resources and one-to-one support. They make satisfactory progress compared to all students nationally. Students known to be eligible for free schools meals make the same progress as other groups and the gap between the attainment of these students and the national average is closing. In the sixth form, examination results have improved since the last inspection and students make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Students rarely leave without a place at university, a job with training or a suitable course in further education.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory. The responses from parents and carers and students broadly reflect this judgement. Good quality teaching is increasing but it is not yet consistent across the college and very little is outstanding. Where teaching is effective, it ensures students are active participants in their learning. For example, this was seen in a well executed Year 11 chemistry lesson where students made good progress through effective collaboration. Where teaching is good, expected outcomes are made clear and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers' subject knowledge is used well to probe students' understanding and develop their thinking skills. For example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson this was evident through a high level of teacher's questioning, resulting in students building well on their prior learning.

A structured approach to lesson planning takes account of students' different needs. The curriculum has been adjusted to raise students' motivation, for example, with the introduction of BTEC science. Teachers' higher expectations result in most students working productively because tasks and activities engage their interests. An initiative called 'Light box', a title suggested by students themselves, enables particularly more-able students to use more creative and imaginative thinking skills across different subjects. Spiritual and cultural aspects of students' development are promoted overtly through subjects such as English, the performing arts and humanities. Students can reflect on their own and others' beliefs and show respect for cultural and human diversity.

The use of assessment in lessons to promote effective learning is a growing strength. Students' work is marked regularly and frequently, providing clear information about the next steps for improving their understanding. The majority of students know and understand their targets. However, effective practice in marking is not consistent

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across all subjects. In the best examples, feedback focuses on spelling and the use of technical terms. Teachers' comments are followed up to ensure continuous improvement but there is some inconsistency in the implementation of such effective practice.

All teachers are aware of their responsibility for developing literacy and communication skills and there are examples of good strategies to support weaker readers, particularly in Years 7 and 8. In some lessons seen, students were asked to read aloud which they did willingly. Small and paired group work helps to develop students' speaking and listening skills adequately. In many lessons, teachers pay attention to helping students to use subject specialist vocabulary accurately.

Some aspects of teaching are not good enough to enable students to make faster and consistently good progress. Where lessons are too teacher-led and where there is a limited use of stimulating resources, students have fewer opportunities to actively engage in their learning. There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills through, for instance, research and problem-solving tasks. Although teachers share good practice in teaching within, and more recently, across subjects, the best practice is not widely disseminated to help raise students' achievement.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. In effective lessons, students learn at a brisk pace because teachers use their subject knowledge well and enthuse students to use their independent skills in a range of subjects. However, this is not consistent across Years 12 and 13, reflecting students' satisfactory rather than good achievement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The great majority of parents and carers say that their children feel safe at the college and this view is echoed by the students themselves. They have a good understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside the college. Attendance is in line with the national average. A change of timing to the start of the day now ensures that students are punctual and the great majority move between lessons promptly.

Since the last inspection raised expectations led to an initial rise in levels of fixed term exclusions but these are now declining significantly. Behaviour in lessons is managed well in the majority of cases. Low level disruptions to learning were not seen at the time of the inspection. Students, parents and carers state that occasional weakness in the management of behaviour results in a few students behaving inappropriately. Students also say that it is dealt with quickly and that such low level disruption is not a major problem in the vast majority of lessons. Most students behave well around the college. Visitors often comment on students' politeness and welcoming nature. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and most parents, carers and students express confidence in the college's systems for dealing with such occurrences. Students actively get involved in anti-bullying activities. A very effective

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assembly was seen on this theme during the inspection.

Leadership and management

The principal and her senior leadership team lead effectively, showing vision and tenacity. They have challenged complacency and used performance management well to improve the quality of teaching. There are now no endemic inadequacies in teaching and underachievement is very largely eradicated. Professional support and development for staff is ensuring that the quality of teaching continues to improve. Leadership is also successful in developing middle leaders' skills so that they are increasingly confident and capable of securing students' better achievement. These successes demonstrate the leadership's good capacity to continue to improve.

Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and know what needs to improve. Consequently, the gaps in progress made by students compared to students nationally are reducing, reflecting sound promotion of equality. Groups of students who are in circumstances that make them more vulnerable are supported effectively by good links with external partners. Partnership with other providers also benefits sixth form students.

The impact of the curriculum on students' outcomes is satisfactory. The performing arts specialism is used well to enrich the curriculum and contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students take on leadership roles and participate in decision making both in college and in the wider community. They are able to express their views, for example, through a broad range of surveys and the college council.

Members of the governing body are good ambassadors for the college and hold leaders to account for students' performance. They ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. They keep a close eye on safeguarding arrangements and their monitoring makes sure that requirements are met. College leaders have demonstrated their good ability to bring about improvement well since the last inspection. Parents, carers and students acknowledge this, summarised by a parent's response, 'I have not always been happy but the school is now better than ever.'

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Latimer Arts College, Kettering NN15 6SW

Thank you for your warm welcome given at our recent inspection. Your views, alongside responses from your parents and carers, were helpful in assisting us. I am delighted to report that your college is now satisfactory and no longer needs a notice to improve. The sixth form is also satisfactory.

Many of you told us that the college has improved since the last inspection. We agree that teaching is now satisfactory, helping you to make sound progress by the end of Years 11 and 13. In 2011, GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics were the college's highest and significantly above the national average. GCSE results in modern foreign languages were below and your progress is still not as secure as it should be. In your responses, the majority of you indicate that behaviour in the college and in lessons is good. Others said that there are still a few students who disrupt lessons occasionally. We judge your overall behaviour and punctuality as satisfactory. We agree with those parents and carers who suggest that the college could do more to engage them in your learning.

We have asked leaders to do the following things.

- Raise your achievement to be at least good by making sure that you experience consistently good teaching that challenges you; involves you more in the learning; gives you opportunities to use independent skills; and improves marking so that it is consistently helpful.
- Raise standards and improve the progress you make in modern foreign languages.
- Engage your parents and carers more in your learning.

You have an important part to play in ensuring that the college continues to improve by making sure that you all behave well in every lesson and work as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector

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