

John Ferneley College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120264
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	358731
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	964
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Conroy Godber
Headteacher	Chris Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2007
School address	Scalford Road Melton Mowbray LE13 1LH
Telephone number	01664 565901
Fax number	01664 480251
Email address	ask@johnferneley.org.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 38 lessons of 38 different teachers, met with parents, groups of students, staff and the Chair of Governors. They observed the college's work, and looked at records of student achievement, key college policies, governing body minutes, and notes of visits from local authority officers. They analysed questionnaires from 147 students, 47 staff and 248 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well are students learning in the long teaching sessions?
- What is the quality of routine marking and feedback to students?
- How well do teachers plan activities that challenge and stretch students, particularly the most able?
- How well is the college ensuring the attendance of students?

Information about the school

When the college was inspected in 2007, it was an 11-14 middle school, with plans to become one of three 11-19 secondary schools in Melton Mowbray, with a maximum of 800 11-16 students on roll, operating a shared sixth form between those schools. A new building designed for 800 students opened in the spring of 2010. In 2010, however, one of the other schools closed, resulting in an additional influx of students. A disused older block was re-commissioned, pending the construction of extended accommodation to cope with the 30% increase of numbers. The college is now about the same size as most secondary schools. About half of the staff have been appointed since the previous inspection. Plans for a collaborative sixth form in the town were stopped, although John Ferneley retains its 11-19 designation. At present, the college has Year 7 to Year 11 students, with Year 11 being the first cohort through the new Key Stage 4. It also became a specialist Business and Enterprise College in September 2010.

Almost all students are of White British heritage. The college has: a low proportion of students for whom English is their second language; a low proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals; and a broadly average proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs, and on the college's register for special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

John Ferneley College is a good school with several outstanding features. Excellent strategic leadership from the governing body, and outstanding steadfastness of vision and purpose from the Principal has accomplished a successful transformation from a small middle school to a growing secondary school. Initial doubts and fears of students and parents have been successfully allayed. Working relationships between students and staff are good and form an important element of good learning. Despite the potential for difficulties as part of the rapid influx of 'displaced' students from their former school, attendance is broadly average and improving.

The new building has allowed a new approach to lesson timetables, the curriculum and the management and organisation of teaching and learning. These are very new to most of the students and staff and include shared restaurant services for staff and students, staggered breaks and lunchtimes, and long teaching sessions. The quality of teaching is good, particularly so at Key Stage 4, where three quarters of lessons are good or better. No inadequate teaching was evident, in any lesson, at any time of the two and a half hour session. There are examples of excellent assessment for learning practices that assign challenging tasks to all abilities of students from the outset of the lesson. However, some more-able students occasionally have to plough through straightforward activities before getting to more challenging work. There are many examples of clear, well-judged marking that gives students clear direction on how to improve their work. Such exemplary practice is not evident in every lesson. Very strong partnerships with other providers allow a versatile and rich curriculum for Key Stage 4 students, including effective arrangements to support students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable to underachievement. The latter is delivered via 'The Hub', a shared venture based in the centre of town and funded jointly by the partner secondary schools.

Students generally enjoy college, although some older students expressed a few reservations, with some wistful recollections of an earlier, smaller, middle school. Year 7 students, however, were delighted with the college, and all students appreciated the quality of building and effective use of some excellent resources for teaching. Information and communication technology (ICT) is embedded in the five 'learning zones' and in constant use to support learning. Despite some reservations of students in the surveys, and in their observations to inspectors, their behaviour in and around college is predominantly good. The positive ethos evident in the spacious corridors and restaurant areas during the long staggered lunchtime is a testimony to the intrinsically good behaviour of almost all students, and their good social and moral development.

College managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the college well, including the inevitable glitches that occur with such a major change of site, age-range and curriculum. Managers and staff have all coped well with the challenges of designing and delivering a

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new Key Stage 4 curriculum from scratch. There has been no discernable negative impact on outcomes for students; indeed outcomes are good for all groups of learners including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This strength in depth across middle leaders, coupled with the very quick response by senior staff and governors to rapidly changing circumstances, demonstrates the good capacity of the college to continue to improve.

The pace of change has left a few parents unhappy, mainly as necessary curriculum changes to accommodate the recent influx have happened too quickly for full consultation. The capacity of senior leadership is being strengthened as quickly as recruiting allows, and the college is realising the critical need for delegating responsibility for managing the college on a day-to-day basis to zone leaders, as the size of the college increases. One or two staff, a few parents, and some students, had noted some inconsistencies of approach between curriculum zones in the management of minor behaviour imperfections mainly linked to uniform. The opportunities for students to feedback their views directly to college managers are at present relatively formal, relying on e-mail and survey returns.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the zone model for pastoral and curriculum organisation by:
 - establishing more regular opportunities for students to talk informally with zone leaders and senior staff about their views on the development of the college
 - ensuring a consistent approach between zones on managing low-level misdemeanours and implementing the John Ferneley code of conduct.
 - Consider how to involve parents and students better when providing information about the college's priorities and the reasons for strategic decisions, and on how the college has dealt with their general concerns and suggestions.
 - Move teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - establishing the consistency of lesson planning to challenge the needs and interests of more-able students
 - ensuring that the very high quality of feedback to students evident in the majority of lessons is occurring in all.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of students entering the college at Key Stage 3 from primary school is broadly average. In all years, students achieve well, make good progress, and so academic attainment at Key Stage 3 is above average. The college takes care to use external professional moderators to confirm their own teacher assessments. Standards of English are particularly good, including spoken English as well as written work; a skill that is further enhanced through teaching business and enterprise skills at Key Stage 3 as part of the specialist status. Some evidence from already completed GCSE modules shows Year 11 students to be on target for gaining above average attainment next year. Staff from local businesses conduct mock interviews (at Key Stage 3) and report favourably on students' skills. Despite the sudden arrival of students part way through Key Stage 3 and 4, many of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the college has

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managed to assess their needs and put process in place to support them; as result these students are making equally good progress.

Teacher-student relationships are good humoured and proactive. Much effort goes into breaking up the long teaching sessions with 'fascinators' and other interest-grabbing interludes; good learning occurs at every stage of a session. Most students enjoy college. Sometimes progress flagged a bit when teachers attempted over-lengthy summary sessions or introductory sessions; these were the exception, not the rule. However, a few students and staff said they found two and a half hours with no break to be difficult. The intrinsically good behaviour of students makes a positive contribution to their good learning. When they get the opportunity, students have good research and independent learning skills and are skilled in using ICT routinely to support their learning across subjects. The college has managed to slightly improve attendance compared to when it was operating as a middle school. Typically, attendance decreases in Key Stage 4, compared to Key Stage 3, so the college has bucked that trend in maintaining reasonable attendance, including amongst those recently arrived students from other settings.

There is a high degree of participation in the excellent range of after-college clubs, a good restaurant service providing healthy food that many students enjoy, and students know how to stay fit and well. Most say they feel safe in college, mindful of a few who had some reservations about perceived intimidation stemming from communities outside of the college. There are year councils, run by teachers, and these consider college procedures and provisions, taking ideas from class representatives. However, some students expressed a wish to have more of a voice in college affairs, a better explanation of what the college is doing to respond to their concerns and, in particular, have better opportunities to talk through those concerns face to face with college managers. One student thought that the ICT-based communication of information, including assemblies was leading to a 'disconnection' between himself and senior staff. The college is planning to build an assembly space that should facilitate corporate gathering in a new 'enrichment' zone.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have high expectations in good lessons, demanding hard work and high standards. In these lessons, teachers use a full range of activities and techniques to engage and sustain interest, and provide students with time for independent study, or experiment, or practical work. In these good or better lessons, which form the substantial majority of the provision, teachers are skilled at using questions to probe and extend students' learning. Where teaching is more ordinary, students are not all participating, for example they may be listening to a discourse, or waiting for others to answer questions rather than all having a go. Most lesson plans make some acknowledgment of a range of students' ability, with a common theme of 'differentiation by outcome.' The best plans direct specific tasks to particular students from the outset, pitched at a level that stretches the most able. The college has plans to address this aspect of assessment for learning, with strategies to widen the best practice to all lessons. Day-to-day marking is generally good, with some outstanding examples of directed feedback to students that has caused improvement as the students have responded to that advice; such practice is not consistently operating in all subjects.

The curriculum benefits from good teaching resources, particularly ICT. These resources are available to staff and students alike outside lessons, as well as within. At Key Stage 4, partnerships with the other local providers permit a wider range of options to be available including diplomas and other vocational courses. This is made easier through a common

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blocked weekly timetable operating in all of the schools and is evidence of strong partnership working up to Key Stage 4. There are odd anomalies; for example, all of Year 10 science happens on one day, and this is not popular with some students and parents. Nothing detrimental in terms of progress in science was evident. 'The Hub' provides alternative, good experiences for some students at risk of not coping with a conventional approach; that has some remarkable success in ensuring students move into gainful employment or study.

At Key Stage 3, subject areas have some autonomy over assessment and testing frequencies. A more rigorous approach at Key Stage 4 sees all subjects conducting half-termly checks that feed into the college's tracking systems and give early notice of any students who look to be falling short of predictions. Extra classes, after-college club and one-to-one tuition are used to help boost attainment, where necessary, in key subjects such as English and mathematics. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and receive good quality support through the learning assistants assigned to each learning zone. Considering the upheaval that many newly-arrived students have experienced, the care and support they are getting are remarkably effective at helping them to settle and become well integrated 'co-owners' of their new community.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal, supported by excellent governance, has steadfastly delivered his vision for the new college. His senior leadership team has managed additional influx in student numbers without deviating from the original plan of zoned curriculum areas, long teaching sessions, and shared social spaces for teachers and students. So far, the good student outcomes are testament to the success for that vision and of the substantial capacity already in the college's leadership teams to deliver challenging plans. There are some shortfalls in consistency of delivery between the different zones, but the bigger picture is one of outstanding leadership with effective management and support.

The scrutiny of the governing body and their determination to stick by the principle of 'partnership', including at post-16 level, are very strong. They have acted quickly to secure increased capacity at senior level, take very seriously their responsibility for health and safety, and have ensured student and staff safety at a time of great changes to the staffing complement and college buildings. Further work is already in hand to widen the involvement of more staff in aspects of safeguarding, including fire-safety training and increasing the number of designated child protection officers in the college.

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College leaders are effectively focusing their attention on establishing a new cohesive 'learning community' in the expanded college. The college also has good international links, and active partnerships with local Leicester City multi-ethnic schools that provide good opportunities for students to meet peers from different cultural backgrounds. All necessary equalities policies and procedures are in place, with a strong focus on including the most vulnerable of learners. This inclusive attitude is led by the Principal and evident in the way that procedures for dealing with serious misbehaviour include opportunities for students to put right the things that have gone wrong. That determination to educate each learner irrespective of their vulnerabilities ensures good equality of opportunity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

For the most part parents are very pleased with the new college and its direction of travel. For a small minority, the recent closure of another school, and the sudden influx of displaced students as a result, was not what they were promised three years ago. Several expressed reservations about the long length of teaching session, the lack of information about recent curriculum changes and the way the college deals with poor behaviour. A few were unhappy with the quality of response from senior leaders to their concerns. Inspectors found no evidence that long sessions were degrading teaching and learning. Last-minute curriculum changes are inevitable as the college grows so quickly. There was no evidence of disruptive behaviour during the visit. Inspectors did recognise some inconsistency in how the college dealt with occasional minor misdemeanours. The college is increasing its senior leadership capacity, in part to better manage the volume of interaction with parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Ferneley College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 248 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 964 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	28	159	64	15	6	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	63	25	168	68	11	4	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	20	162	66	32	13	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	19	173	70	24	10	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	42	17	180	73	16	7	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	9	165	67	47	19	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	10	173	70	35	14	6	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	12	168	69	19	8	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	14	174	71	24	10	7	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	15	134	54	41	17	18	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	12	154	63	31	13	13	5
The school is led and managed effectively	44	18	165	67	21	9	8	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	20	170	69	19	8	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



10 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of John Ferneley College, Melton Mowbray, LE13 1LH

Thank you for your lively and good-humoured discussions that we held with you during our inspection. The college is undergoing huge changes and it is to your credit that these changes are working well in most cases. Your good behaviour is a substantial factor in the good progress you make in lessons and is also clear in how well you conduct yourselves through the 'staggered' lunchtimes. We note the reservations a few of you have about length of sessions, and the odd anomalous 'whole day doing science' issue, but we do not see any evidence that this is hampering the good progress most of you are making in your learning. The pace of change has been rapid and successful, but sometimes senior staff have not fully explained the changes to you and your parents and carers; we think the college would benefit from taking time to listen to your views face to face more often.

Teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding teaching that inspires and captivates you. Those outstanding episodes usually demand a lot of effort and responsibility from each of you, at a level that matches your capabilities. At its best, marking of your work is careful, supportive and gives you direct advice on how to improve it. We think that to move the college from good to outstanding, teachers should consistently provide lessons that challenge the needs and interests of all students, particularly the more able. Teachers should also make sure you consistently get high quality feedback on how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector

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