

The Latimer Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122066
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359163
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick 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	1162
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Wood
Headteacher	Siobhan Hearne
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
School address	Castle Way Kettering NN15 6SW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 44 lessons, taught by 43 teachers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding, communications with parents and carers, and analysed questionnaires from 104 parents and carers and 120 students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at the following questions.

- To what extent are outcomes improving, particularly in English and mathematics and for the least able students?
- How effectively is the school promoting students' literacy and numeracy skills?
- How well is assessment information used and what impact does this have on the effectiveness of teaching?
- How challenging are targets and what does this indicate about the college's capacity for sustained improvement and the promotion of equal opportunities?

Information about the school

This college is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is about two thirds of the national average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is nearly twice the national average. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. In September 2009, a new principal was appointed. Other members of the college's senior leadership team are also new to their roles. 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: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement.

Although Latimer Arts College is not providing an adequate standard of education, it is improving. There are notable strengths in terms of students' personal development. For instance, students are well aware of how to live healthy lives and most make choices accordingly. The 'Support our Students' initiative involves many older students helping those that are younger. The college council is highly involved in discussing how the college can be improved and, as a result, it is valued by students. Students feel safe and parents and carers agree that their children are secure. High quality support for those with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties enables these students to make better progress than their peers.

In the main college and the sixth form, too much teaching is inadequate and not enough is good. Therefore, students' achievement is inadequate. However, the senior leaders have identified the weaknesses that they must address to ensure improvement. Decisive action has been taken across the college to strengthen leadership. The governing body is increasingly aware of the college's strengths and weaknesses and an improved committee structure is enabling its members to hold senior leaders to account more effectively. There are strengths in how assessment information is used outside of lessons by leaders at all levels. For instance, information relating to a range of outcomes is used so improvements can be made to how effectively the college promotes equal opportunities. More challenging targets have been adopted and have raised expectations about what students can achieve. Assessment information is now used well to target support and evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the college. Weaknesses in the approach to safeguarding have been quickly addressed to make this aspect good. Improvements to teaching have resulted in higher levels of enjoyment and students are making better progress although this is not sufficient to overcome the trend of previously lower achievement in the past. The curriculum has improved, so that students with lower abilities are making better progress and higher mathematics results are already being achieved. Students were observed to be making good progress in English and the subjects most closely associated with the college's specialism. Although the specialism has not had sufficient impact on improving attainment, it has contributed to the improved levels of enjoyment. The increasingly reliable tracking of the progress students make also points to an improving picture. These growing strengths mean that the college has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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Weaknesses in the use of assessment in lessons mean that the next steps in learning are not always identified with sufficient precision and teachers' questioning does not consistently challenge all students. Standards of presentation are often poor and students are not always aware of their targets, partly because marking is often cursory. Although leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, judgements made about lessons are sometimes generous because insufficient regard is given to the progress made by all groups of students. Literacy and numeracy skills are not promoted sufficiently well throughout the curriculum. Weaknesses in middle leadership have been tackled but these leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching and learning. Attendance in the sixth form is too low.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress students make in the main college and the sixth form by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - ensuring all teachers effectively plan lessons that enable all groups of students in lessons make good progress
 - effectively promoting higher standards of presentation
 - ensuring all students are aware of their challenging targets and what they must do to achieve them
 - improving the use of assessment so that questioning ensures all students are challenged and in order to more accurately determine the next steps in learning
 - ensuring students' literacy and numeracy skills are promoted in all lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation in the main college and the sixth form by:
 - increasing middle leaders' involvement in the monitoring of teaching and learning, including regularly reviewing students' work
 - ensuring evaluations of teaching focus on the progress made by all groups of students in lessons
 - ensuring effective action is taken promptly in response to evaluations of the effectiveness of teaching and the use of assessment.
- Improve the rate of attendance in the sixth form so that it is at least 93% by December 2011.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Students generally enter the college with above average attainment, although there is some variation and a minority of year groups is closer to average. In the last three years, attainment by the end of Year 11 has been consistently average, although the number of students gaining the higher grades at GCSE has been below average. The average attainment is reflected in the numbers gaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE. The college's results over the last three years, including those for 2010, confirm a picture of inadequate progress overall. Although the progress made by students with lower ability is improving, they continue to make

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inadequate progress, in part because of weaknesses in their literacy and numeracy skills. In lessons students of middle ability make better progress because lessons tend to be pitched at the needs of this group. More-able students make insufficient progress because they are not always challenged. Those students with a statement of special educational needs make better progress than those who are on the special needs register but do not have a statement. There are no significant differences in performance between boys and girls, or those known to be eligible for free school meals. The few students with a statement of special needs with a hearing impairment or other physical disabilities, make good progress. Early entry and module examinations indicate that students are expected to obtain higher results in mathematics next year.

Students' attitudes to learning are generally positive with many showing enthusiasm for their work. When students are given access to the assessment criteria, they show a commendable willingness to work hard to achieve well, although some lack confidence in making improvements. Students take part in at least the minimum recommended amount of physical education each week and many have more exercise through participation in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities. The college effectively promotes students' moral and social development, hence there are strengths in how students behave and they participate well in group work. Leaders recognise that there is still more to do to promote the cultural and spiritual aspects of learning. Students' enjoyment contributes to the above average attendance in the main college.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

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How effective is the provision?

The approach to planning lessons is designed to challenge students of different abilities. In the hands of confident teachers, this is used well to ensure all groups of learners progress well. However, in practice there are too many occasions when work is not matched closely to students' learning needs or to the level they have reached. At such times, there is a lack of challenge particularly for the higher-attaining students in the class. Some questioning probes students' understanding well. A range of strategies is used at times to ensure all students are made to think about appropriate responses. For instance, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher showed determination in ensuring all students justified the extent to which they agreed with a particular response. However, too often teachers accept responses from the keen students without encouraging others to consider the key questions in sufficient depth. Occasionally, the work for the lower-attaining pupils proves to be too difficult and examples were seen of teaching assistants not being able to offer support because the teacher talked for too long. An increasing number of students are aware of their targets, but many are less sure about how to improve their work. Marking often does not provide students with enough information about how to make their work better. The involvement of students in assessing their own progress is improving, but remains inconsistent across the college. Teachers assess students' attainment and progress accurately, but not enough use is made of the information gained from assessments to plan the next stages of learning and to match work closely to their needs.

The adoption of challenging targets and the much more systematic approach to the monitoring of assessment ensure the college is able to target additional support very effectively. Nevertheless, the extent of under-performance caused by weaknesses in teaching is such that this intervention cannot completely compensate for the shortfall.

There are major strengths in the curriculum, for instance the greater range of vocational courses that are better meeting the needs of students, particularly those with lower abilities. Year 7 students enthused about their enjoyable 'Think Big' lessons which are enabling them to be better learners. The college monitors students' participation in extra-curricular opportunities and is beginning to take steps to ensure equality of access. Students have a well-rounded education with all undertaking subjects associated with the arts specialism. Students are, rightly, proud of their regular performances and of the outcomes of art and design and of design and technology lessons, which are displayed around in the college.

Leaders can point to many striking examples of steps they have taken to ensure that students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are included. There is an admirably preventative approach to ensure the full inclusion of its physical and hearing impaired students. Persistent absences are low and overall attendance in the main college is above average as a result of the effective strategies the college has developed with outside agencies.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new senior leadership team has driven through important improvements that have laid the foundation for more rapid progress to be made. Crucially, the college has much more challenging targets. Important changes to leadership have been made, including in the sixth form. Roles and responsibilities are much clearer and leaders throughout the college are working on the right priorities. The college is working with a range of partners to improve teaching and learning and to offer a more varied curriculum. Although important improvements have been made in a wide number of areas, less progress has been made in improving teaching and the use of assessment in lessons. Weaknesses in the management of teaching and learning are limiting the impact of training activity, even where this is well matched to the needs of staff.

The college has demonstrated a strong commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities and recognises that further action in this area will support the improvement it seeks in outcomes. The college counters all discrimination, for instance through the stance it takes on racist name-calling. Successful action has been taken to ensure the inclusion of the physically disabled and hearing impaired students. The college communicates well with parents and carers, and effective work is being undertaken to ensure the involvement of those whose circumstances are likely to make children vulnerable. However, there is more to do in supporting parents so they can help with their children's learning. There are strengths in the way community cohesion is promoted in terms of the college as a community and the immediate locality. Leaders have, rightly, identified that a future priority it to better promote the national and international aspects of community cohesion. A start has been made but there is still more to do to address these aspects.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

The sixth form outcomes largely reflect those in the main college. Over the last three years, students have not made enough progress because teaching and the use of assessment are inadequate. Members of the sixth form make a strong and positive contribution with almost all working in some way to support younger students. Sixth form students are also involved in providing leadership in a number of areas, for instance through the college council and the work the college undertakes supporting arts development in local primary schools. Students reported that there have been improvements to the climate for learning in the sixth form, with more evidence of private study taking place. Although students take care to ensure their personal well-being, the low level of attendance in the sixth form is a cause for concern.

In the more effective lessons, sixth formers are skilfully enabled to use the assessment criteria in order to take responsibility for achieving their challenging targets. However, in too many lessons, teaching is pitched at the middle and the full ability range is not sufficiently challenged. Only recently, have more challenging targets been established but their use is not fully embedded. For instance, some students who did well at AS-level have not had their targets reviewed to reflect their better performance. However, students reported that generally they do receive the support and guidance they need. Leaders are beginning to work with other providers to offer a greater range of courses.

Until recently, leaders and managers have not been effective in ensuring at least satisfactory outcomes. Targets have not been sufficiently challenging and monitoring and evaluation have not been effective in ensuring at least a satisfactory level of provision. Since September 2010, a new leadership team has been in place and a clear plan has been produced to bring about improvement. Although this team is new to the role, it is beginning to demonstrate a more robust approach to using data.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form	4
Leadership and management of the sixth form	4

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are supportive of the college and the large majority agreed with all the statements in the questionnaire. Almost all parents and carers think their child enjoys college. A very small minority of parents and carers disagreed that the college helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle or that the college takes account of parental views. Inspectors investigated these aspects and found there are plans to do more to improve both these areas. A few parents disagreed with the statement relating to the college dealing effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, there were a few examples of unacceptable behaviour associated with inadequate teaching. Additionally, a very small minority of parents and carers also disagreed that the college is led and managed effectively. The inspection evidence supports the views that further improvement is required in the quality of teaching and learning and in monitoring and evaluating the college's effectiveness. These have been highlighted as areas for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Latimer Arts 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 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	36	61	59	3	3	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	35	34	58	56	8	8	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	36	35	61	59	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	35	61	59	5	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	25	24	66	63	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	30	55	53	13	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	22	62	60	14	13	1	1
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)	31	30	55	53	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	39	51	49	9	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	26	53	51	10	10	7	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	20	62	60	12	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	31	55	53	11	11	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	38	58	56	5	5	1	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.



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

26 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Latimer Arts College, Kettering, NN15 6SW

Following the inspection of your college, I would particularly like to thank the students we interviewed for the perceptive views they gave.

Although attainment is average, weaknesses in teaching are such that too many of you do not make enough progress during your time at the college. For this reason, we concluded that the quality of education provided is inadequate although there are some important strengths. Foremost, your college's leadership team knows what to do to improve provision and has already made a start. The college does a good job in ensuring you contribute to both the college and the wider community, and in encouraging you to be healthy. We concluded that the care and guidance you receive is good because, for example, you told us that you feel safe and there is always an adult you can talk to. The college ensures that you get well-timed support when you need it. You told us that you enjoy college and we could see why. The college provides a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, often associated with the art specialism. In addition, we think that in most lessons teachers try to actively involve you in a range of activities.

To improve further, we have asked the college's leaders to ensure you make good progress by better matching the lessons to your needs. We have asked that you receive more feedback on what you should do to achieve your challenging targets. You can all help by asking questions to ensure you are clear about what you should do to improve. In lessons, we have asked that teachers adopt more strategies to ensure you all have an opportunity to consider fully the important questions. In addition, teachers should do more to remind you of the importance of good presentation in your work. We have also asked that leaders check regularly to make sure that these things are happening in lessons. Through your effective college council, you can give your opinions about how well the college is ensuring everyone follows this guidance. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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