

Sir Harry Smith Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110870
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	363774
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Trevor Riddiough 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1072
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Beebe
Headteacher	Jonathan Digby
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2008
School address	Eastrea Road Peterborough PE7 1XB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 37 teachers in 40 lessons, five tutor groups and one assembly. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of students, and members of the governing body. They 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, college documents and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 177 students, 63 staff and 144 parents and carers were received and analysed.

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

- How well have leaders at all levels ensured rigour with evaluations to bring about improvements in the rates of progress that students are making, both in the main college and in the sixth form?
- To what extent is leadership at all levels securing improvements in teaching and learning both in the main college and in the sixth form?
- How well is assessment used to promote the progress that students make?
- To what extent does the curriculum meet the needs of students of all abilities?

Information about the school

Sir Harry Smith Community College is a larger-than-average comprehensive school with a sixth form. It takes students predominantly from the rural area of Whittlesey and its surrounding villages. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school population is largely White British and very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at the early stages of learning English. The college was awarded specialist science status in 2003 specialising in science, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Kite marks have been achieved in Art, Basic Skills, Geography and Inclusion. It also holds accreditation in Investors in People. The school is a designated community college and is available for community use.

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

Sir Harry Smith Community College is a good college where the personal development of students is a significant strength. Students start at the college with average levels of attainment and they make good progress to reach above average attainment in the national tests and examinations in most subjects by the end of Year 11. However, this pattern of attainment is not replicated across all subjects. Senior leaders have rightly identified the causes of this variability and steps are being taken to address them but it is too early for these to have had full impact on learning. Challenging targets are set and senior leaders are confident that the 2011 examination results will continue to rise in most subjects. The college's own data and the inspectors' observations support the views of the senior staff.

The care, guidance and support offered to students are outstanding and these contribute positively to the students' personal development and create an extremely safe and supportive environment. Students are responsible members of the college and make a positive contribution to its community. For example, many take a full and active part in the school council, some take responsibility as prefects, and others support younger students through the mentoring programme.

The curriculum and other activities are good. The introduction of applied GCSE and other vocational courses illustrates the college's drive to widen access further and make learning more suitable to students' specific needs and interests. Links with local businesses and other providers help students to prepare well for their future economic well-being and students are well equipped with the key skills that they need for life beyond college. Senior leaders have widened the opportunities for work-related learning through a programme of vocational courses often delivered in partnership with other schools and colleges.

Staff display high levels of commitment towards every student, reflecting the college's caring ethos. There are some examples of good guidance to students, which inform them of their progress and how to improve their performance. However, this advice through marking is not consistent across all subjects. All of the teaching is satisfactory and much is good, resulting in the good progress seen in the majority of lessons. The attainment of students is sometimes restricted because teachers do not always plan activities that are sufficiently challenging for students of differing attainment levels, particularly higher attainers. The improved tracking system is now highly efficient in the use of data to track individual students' progress, and identifies those who are likely to miss their targets. Interventions are underway to help students catch up and, as appropriate, targeted students are offered revision or catch-up classes or re-sit examinations. Staff training and departmental work have included a good focus on developing teaching strategies to promote students' learning. The science specialism contributes to college improvement in

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this respect through its work to embed the tracking of students' progress across the college. The college has focused professional development and support for teachers on improving the quality of teaching and learning and teachers are clear about what constitutes effective teaching.

The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders is increasingly robust, leading to a virtual eradication of inadequate teaching and to attending to identified weaknesses. There are well-judged strategies in place to share the best practice across the college and this is beginning to make an impact on underperforming subjects. The principal is ambitious for the college and has encouraged senior managers to focus more sharply on those aspects of the college's work that will secure sustained improvement. For example, timely concentration on developing the skills of subject leaders has resulted in significant improvements being made in those departments targeted, for example in science. The governing body works closely with senior leaders and challenges the college to focus on the areas identified as weak. This has resulted in the tight monitoring of the college development plan and has resulted in a trend of improvement in many key areas. The college's use of self-evaluation, the improving trend and the widely shared commitment to raising achievement further reflects good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement across the college by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan consistently to secure the highest attainment possible in all lessons
 - reducing the variation in subject performance across the college through sharing the good practice that exists in teaching
 - ensuring that the monitoring of the sixth form provision is more effective in bringing about improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that it is consistently good by:
 - challenging all students with work that matches their level of understanding and their capacity to learn
 - providing consistently clear advice and guidance to students through the day-to-day marking of their work on to how to accelerate their progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students start college with standards which are broadly average. The GCSE results of 2010 were above average in most measures. These were the best in the college's history, with 77% of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE. The proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has also risen over the past two years, and is now well above the national average. Measures of progress were above expectations in English and mathematics but were below expectations for all subjects. There are few differences in the achievement of different groups of students in the college. However, gaps in achievement still remain, notably that of middle-ability boys and there is significant variation in the performance of a small minority of subjects, notably in food technology, geography, PE and RE.

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As a result of improving teaching, rigorous tracking and subsequent wide-ranging intervention to help students identified at risk of underachievement, there is a clearly improving trend in attainment in most subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and benefit from good academic and pastoral support. Students in the current Year 11 are on target for even higher results in 2011 in English and mathematics but not yet for all other subjects. The inspection evidence confirms that the progress that students make is still variable and in some subjects is less than could be expected given their capabilities. Students are generally engaged in their learning and they take part enthusiastically in active and interesting lessons.

The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the college benefits individuals' confidence and self-belief. Students feel much valued and say they feel very safe. They are actively encouraged to live healthily and most do so, for example, through their participation in sports activities. Students have positive attitudes to learning and the great majority attend regularly, enjoy their lessons, and behave well around the college. However, a few are distracted in class when the tasks set are less demanding.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

The quality of teaching is good and is still improving. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and use a good range of learning activities to promote students' progress.

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Good use is made of resources to enhance learning, including information and communication technology and the effective use of notebooks in mathematics. Assessment procedures, especially the use of tracking data, are used well to enable teachers to plan effectively. However, the planning to build on students' capabilities, particularly of the most able, is not consistently applied across all subjects. When not sufficiently challenged, students do not make enough progress and some shy away from their learning and can become distracted. In some lessons, guidance given through teachers' marking on how to improve is too variable to have full impact on students' progress.

The curriculum provides a variety of pathways and students have access to a range of academic and vocational subjects. There is good opportunity to study at different levels at Key Stage 4 so that the curriculum can be personalised and tailored according to student need. The college adapts a flexible approach and regularly reviews the curriculum to match it to the particular needs of students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The 'Skills for Life' curriculum makes a strong contribution to the development of key skills as well as students' moral and social development.

Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Parents' and carers' agree that adult care is of a high standard in the college. Targeted support for groups of students who are vulnerable because of their circumstances has resulted in them making good progress in their learning and development. Case studies exemplify the effectiveness of the college in helping individual students to overcome significant barriers to their education and the college's work with families is deeply embedded. Excellent advice is given to support students to make informed choices about their future. As a result of this excellent provision, students have great confidence in the college to advise and support them with any needs or concerns.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal provides strong leadership and is ambitious that the college provides the very best for every student. This aim is shared widely by the staff, students, parents and governors. The recently formed senior team, together with the governing body, has refocused the vision for the college and produced an improvement plan. This is helping them to address the immediate priorities and also set clear strategies for further sustainable improvement. The senior team has worked hard to ensure that the subject leaders are able to take on these improvement priorities and impact is now being seen in many, but not yet all, targeted areas. Thorough monitoring of teaching and learning

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ensures that leaders have a clear understanding of ways in which teaching can be improved further. Target setting is realistic and challenging, leading to good outcomes, and some areas are improving well.

The college communicates effectively with parents and carers. It regularly asks parents and carers for their views and the 'Parents and Carers' Council' is instrumental in following up on these. The college's promotion of equality of opportunities is central to its pastoral provision as well as to student outcomes. Regular monitoring ensures that any potentially underachieving group of students is carefully targeted to ensure that they catch up, for example, in the recent drive to support the achievement of middle-ability boys.

The governing body has taken seriously its role in monitoring all aspects of provision at the college and appropriately challenges college leaders to account for its actions and outcomes. Robust systems are in place to ensure that safeguarding is effective. There is comprehensive training of all staff, and governors and the college staff work well with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to students. The college works hard to ensure that internal and local community cohesion is effective. Students get along well with each other and with adults, and community partnerships are strong. International links are developing, for example, with its links in Zambia and, following a review, the college is now working on extending the opportunities for widening the cultural experiences of its students.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress relative to their attainment in the sixth form so that by the end of Year 13 their A level and BTEC results are broadly average. These results have been improving in recent years. Students' study skills have also improved since the last inspection and students generally work well individually and in groups, and are often

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encouraged to develop and share ideas on their own. For example, in a Year 12 practical biochemistry lesson, students worked well together in pairs using a colourimeter to describe and explain calibration curves firstly to each other and then to their teacher. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons, students are actively engaged in their work and are given clear guidance on the criteria to drive towards higher grades which results in their good progress. In other lessons, teachers often talk for too long or fail to challenge students sufficiently to do more in the time allocated. In these lessons, progress is limited.

The curriculum draws in more students year-on-year as it adds extra subjects for students to study. However, the choice is restricted to mainly A-level academic courses together with a few vocational courses. Care, guidance and support of students is a strength of the sixth form, with students receiving dedicated time with their tutor. Regular monitoring of progress allows tutors to resolve any difficulties that students experience which might lead to underperformance. The personal development of students is promoted well by their tutors as well as through the personal educational programme that all students take. The proportion of students not entering further education, employment or training is relatively low and most students go on to study at university. The leadership and management of the sixth form is improving and is developing a more academic focus. A new system of tracking has been implemented that checks students' progress towards their targets, allowing for early intervention. This has yet to show full impact. The arrangements for monitoring provision are in place but are not as fully embedded as those for the main college. As a result, improvements are not having enough impact on outcomes.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who completed questionnaires were positive about the college and their children's education. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about the college's promotion of healthy lifestyles. Inspectors followed up these concerns: they judged that the college has good arrangements for the promotion of students' health and well-being both in the curriculum and through extra curricular opportunities.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir Harry Smith Community 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 144 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1072 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	36	81	56	8	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	51	35	89	62	2	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	70	49	68	47	5	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	44	71	49	9	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	33	85	59	6	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	27	82	57	16	11	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	18	94	65	21	15	0	0
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)	42	29	88	61	5	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	30	88	61	8	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	25	87	60	10	7	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	24	87	60	11	8	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	52	36	79	55	9	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	40	77	53	3	2	4	3

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



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4 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Harry Smith Community College, Peterborough, PE7 1XB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we inspected your college. Your views were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with those of you we spoke to in lessons, in meetings and around the college.

The college provides you with a good quality of education. You receive exceptional care, guidance and support and are provided with a good curriculum that meets your needs well. Staff work hard to support you and they monitor the progress that you make and take action to support you whenever it appears that you may not meet your academic targets. As a result, you generally make good progress and achieve well in most, but not quite in all, of your subjects. Your attendance and behaviour are both good.

Your college has a strong leadership team which is committed to giving you best possible education and is focused on improving the achievement of all students in the college. Like all good schools and colleges, it recognises that there is still more that can be done to improve further, and so we have identified some areas that need to improve. These are:

Make sure that teachers plan to ensure that all of you in class make the most possible progress, including high attainers.

Provide you with clear advice and guidance through the day-to-day marking of your work on to how to accelerate your progress.

Improve subject performance where it is needed.

Bring about further improvements in the sixth form to raise the achievement of all students.

You have a part to play and you can really help your college by ensuring that you do not settle for anything other than your best and that you follow up the comments and suggestions that your teachers make to help you to improve your work. I wish you all success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Sir Harry Smith Community College.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough

Her Majesty's Inspector

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