

Sawtry Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110897
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356834
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Phillips 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	1351
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Leaton
Headteacher	James Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
School address	Fen Lane Sawtry, Huntingdon PE28 5TQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 49 teachers in 49 lessons; they also made several shorter visits to classrooms, including to tutorials. Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, and a senior officer from the local authority. They met with panels of students from Year 8, Year 10, and the sixth form. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school records such as achievement data, and systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching. In addition to the survey of parents' and carers' views, to which 166 replies were received, a sample of students completed a written questionnaire and a staff survey was also conducted.

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

- How consistently do students make progress in all subjects, especially in English?
- How accurate is the college's view that teaching is good, and assessment outstanding?
- How suitable is the curriculum for the needs of all groups of students?
- How well are the college's most vulnerable students supported and guided?
- How well has the sixth form improved since the last inspection?

Information about the school

Sawtry Community College is a large secondary school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage with only a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of students registered with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion, known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average, reflecting high levels of advantage within the school's immediate locality. The school has specialisms in mathematics and computing, and is a designated training school.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Sawtry Community College provides students with a satisfactory standard of education and care. From above-average starting points, students make satisfactory progress to achieve above-average standards in their GCSE examinations. This satisfactory progress is confirmed by work seen in lessons. Students make good progress in mathematics and science, but progress in English is considerably weaker and is a crucial area for further improvement. The development of literacy across all subjects is also an area that requires attention. The satisfactory curriculum provides an adequate range of academic and vocational opportunities and a reasonable range of extra-curricular activities. However, provision for music and drama is limited.

Other outcomes, including the extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles and feel safe, are also satisfactory. Students' behaviour is satisfactory; the college is generally calm and well-ordered, but there is low-level distraction in some classes that is rightly of concern to some students and parents and carers. The main reasons for this are in the teaching, which is also only satisfactory. There are very clear expectations for strongly planned lessons, and the college holds a wealth of data about students' attainment. Teachers are diligent, professionally prepared and have sound subject knowledge, but in too many instances lessons are over-dominated by assessment processes and procedures that do not always promote students' enthusiasm or enjoyment.

Satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding students are in place and the college runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There have been some improvements since the last inspection; this includes the sixth form where provision and outcomes are both now good. There is a broadly accurate understanding of the college's relative strengths and weaknesses, but self-evaluation judgements of the college's performance are too generous in almost all areas. Inspectors do not agree with the college's view that its overall effectiveness is good. There is satisfactory provision in all areas of the college's work; this is illustrated by above-average attendance and the willingness of students to be educated. This and the significant improvements to the sixth form, all suggest that the college has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement and that the college provides satisfactory value for money. However, senior leaders do not evaluate themselves effectively or act incisively enough for the college to make any better than satisfactory progress even though they have established secure data management systems and have clear monitoring arrangements in place.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English so that they are at least well-above national averages, by

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- Significantly increasing the proportions of students gaining grade C or above in GCSE English language and those attaining the highest grades
- Increasing the proportion of students that study GCSE English literature, and ensuring that the great majority of these gain a good GCSE pass in this subject
- Raising standards of written work, including presentation, in all subjects across the curriculum.
- Quicken the pace of learning and increase students' enjoyment in lessons by using assessment more effectively to support, rather than drive, the learning of subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding, including through providing more varied work for students of different abilities.
- Ensure that, by 1 September 2011, there is a detailed strategy for promoting and deepening students' spiritual and cultural understanding; and that this strategy is monitored by senior managers with a formal evaluation in July 2012.
- Sharpen leadership through more incisive self-evaluation that is less dependent on the views of external consultants, and which more accurately assesses the college's effectiveness in the context of students' above-average abilities and national expectations.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students join the college having attained above-average standards in their primary schools. The proportions achieving five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is also regularly above average although only just above in 2010. This was because of significant variations between subjects. Standards were high in science and mathematics, but only just average in English and English literature. The college's tracking suggests an improvement in the standards of English this year, although for the current Year 11 cohort this would still only represent broadly satisfactory progress. The numbers gaining a good pass in a modern language have been broadly average for three years. The proportions taking and gaining a good GCSE pass in history, geography and religious studies were below average in 2010. Overall, boys made better progress than girls, although the reverse was true in 2009. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress similar to that of their peers.

While there are weaknesses in spiritual and cultural education, the great majority of students show a good moral and social understanding; they are biddable and willing to learn, as shown by their above-average attendance. There are some good contributions made to the school and local communities, although not all groups participate equally. Exclusion figures are below average. However, behaviour is only satisfactory because students lose concentration and disturb others in some lessons. Students make good progress in physical education, particularly at GCSE. However, inspectors agree with parents, carers and students that more could be done to promote healthy living, particular with eating choices at break and lunch-times.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching was good or better in around 40% of the lessons observed. The most effective lessons place a high priority on students' active participation in well-paced, creative tasks. For example, in an outstanding design and technology lesson, students greatly enjoyed realising their virtual designs for a bridge, through paired practical work that challenged their understanding of effective design and also developed their team-working skills. Most students are aware of the levels they are working to and teachers plan all lessons carefully, but on many occasions teachers spend too much time taking students through over-complex assessment objectives instead of enabling their direct learning of subject skills and knowledge; these processes dominate rather than support learning. Moreover, teachers do not plan tasks in sufficient detail to provide challenge for all students' learning needs. .

All required curriculum subjects are offered in Key Stage 3, although the time given for music is less than half that given for other foundation subjects. There is similarly limited time provision for religious education. Some opportunities are taken to use drama within the English curriculum but there are no discrete drama courses at any Key Stage. Students are able to choose freely from an adequate range of vocational and academic subjects in Key Stage 4. All students take an OCR National qualification in information and communication technology, reflecting the college's specialism, and the college has also introduced the Diploma in ICT.

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Transition arrangements are good at all three Key Stages. There is a comprehensive gathering of information about students in Years 5 and 6, before they join the college. Year 9 course choices are assisted through a wide range of careers support, and again in Year 11. The mixed-age 'vertical' tutoring system, introduced in September 2009, is generally working well although in some groups students still separate into age-related subgroups. There are well-established systems in place to support the most vulnerable students. There is also a wide range of support initiatives for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Individual case studies are well-maintained but there is limited evaluation of the impact of all this support on outcomes for students. Inspectors acknowledge students' above-average attendance, and judge the effectiveness of care, guidance and support as satisfactory because overall outcomes are also satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The Principal takes an executive role, delegating responsibility for key areas of the college's work to other members of the senior team. Statutory requirements are met for safeguarding students, and appropriate procedures are followed for child protection training. Senior leaders efficiently and regularly check that teachers are following the expected structures and protocols, but records of lesson observations suggest there is less emphasis on the quality of subject-specific learning. There are well-established links with external consultants to challenge the college about its performance. Managers and the governing body are too dependent on these links; senior leaders' pro-activity and independence in evaluating their own performance and in articulating further improvement is sufficient only to assure satisfactory provision and enable students' satisfactory progress. Students' overall social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory; however, not enough is done to promote their cultural understanding further. The college is a cohesive community, and there are links with other schools both locally and internationally. Nonetheless, the college's monitoring and evaluation of this work is inadequate, particularly in developing students' experiences of other cultures.

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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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

There have been clear improvements in the standards achieved by students in A-level examinations. Overall pass rates are now above average. Examination performance is now much more consistent across the curriculum, and students' achievement in all subjects is at least in line with expectations. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Retention rates are improving, too, although attendance remains only broadly average. Students make strong contributions to the school community and make good contributions to the mixed-age tutor groups. Provision in the sixth form is good; this includes good teaching, and a well managed assessment system that supports learning and acts as a good line of communication with parents and carers. Some alternative sixth form courses have been introduced such as childcare, business studies, and applied ICT, but the college recognises that the sixth form curriculum remains heavily weighted towards traditional A-level options.

A deputy principal is responsible for the sixth form and has provided particularly good leadership and management, characterised by her clear vision and determination in her efforts to make improvements. There remain issues for improvement; there is limited use of the student voice, and the programme for personal and social education remains underdeveloped. Nevertheless, improvements since the last inspection suggest that there is good capacity to improve sixth form provision further.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A smaller than usual proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection survey. The majority of these were generally very supportive of the college's work. There were, however, a number of written representations that detailed concerns with teaching and the consistency of behaviour management. These concerns were supported by other inspection evidence including, in the case of behaviour management, the views of staff and students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sawtry 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 166 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1351 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	40	94	57	3	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	63	38	97	58	0	0	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	88	53	75	45	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	40	87	52	8	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	38	23	112	67	10	6	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	25	98	59	15	9	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	15	100	60	30	18	3	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)	52	31	99	60	8	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	30	103	62	6	4	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	20	106	64	15	9	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	16	115	69	8	5	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	51	31	102	61	3	2	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	43	84	51	5	3	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



27 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sawtry Community College, Huntingdon, PE28 5TQ

I am writing to thank you for your cooperation when we visited Sawtry for our recent inspection. We have judged that, overall, the college is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education and care. You make good progress in some areas of your work, but your progress in English is not as good as it should be. We have asked the college to make improvements in English, as a matter of great priority.

We recognise that many of you behave well in school, but we also saw a number of lessons where there was low-level talking and other off-task behaviour. We know from your responses to the inspection questionnaire that this is a concern to some students. Your attendance is clearly above-average; this is a good indication of your willingness to come to school and learn, so we urge you to stay focused in all your classes. As you join the college with above-average abilities, you should be aiming for the highest grades at GCSE.

These are the three other recommendations that we have made to help the college improve further;

For teachers to make better use of assessment in lessons, so that you have more time to get on with your work and ensure that there is more varied work for those of you with different abilities.

Provide more opportunities for you to develop your spiritual understanding and your knowledge of different cultures.

Ensure that college leaders are more accurate in their self-assessment of the college's performance.

Thank you once again for your help with our inspection, and good wishes for your forthcoming examinations.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector

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