

The City of Leicester College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120297
Local Authority	Leicester
Inspection number	379990
Inspection dates	23–24 November 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	Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1370
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kam Mistry
Headteacher	Anne Gregory
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
School address	Downing Drive Leicester LE5 6LN
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 40 teachers in 40 lessons, four tutor groups and one assembly. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of students, and a representative 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, incident logs, and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 177 parents and carers and 126 students 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 does teaching challenge individual students and help them make good progress in lessons?
- How well does assessment support learning to ensure that all students make good progress?
- What is the achievement of White British students and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How effective are leadership and management at all levels (including governance) in monitoring, evaluating and improving performance?

Information about the school

The City of Leicester College is a larger than average-comprehensive school with a sixth form. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and this number is rising. The majority of the students in the sixth form are eligible for the education maintenance allowance. A very large majority of the college population come from minority ethnic backgrounds including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Other Asian, Black Caribbean or mixed backgrounds and most speak English as an additional language. The proportion of those in the early stages of learning to speak English is well above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above the national average. The college was designated a Business and Enterprise College in September 2003, and was redesignated in 2007. The college has received national recognition in a number of areas of its work, notably the Healthy Schools Award, the International Schools Award and the Artsmark.

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

The City of Leicester College is a good and improving college. Under the strong leadership of the very able senior and middle leaders the college has developed systematic and rigorous approaches to its work. The impact of these systems is seen in improved progress, behaviour and teaching. Students' attainment has been rising over time and current Year 11 students are on track to exceed their targets.

Students are also well prepared for life beyond college; not only are their academic standards above average, but they also develop as confident, articulate individuals. Students of different ethnic heritages work harmoniously and are highly productive. A particular contribution is the college's approach as an International School, which does much to promote understanding of communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom and abroad. Most parents and carers are positive about all aspects of the college, summed up in comments such as, 'a brilliant school'. Sixth form students say that they feel able to express their views, which the college and other students take account of.

The large majority of lessons are good or outstanding. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that their strategies match students' needs. Occasional weaknesses in lessons include insufficient challenge for the most able, over-direction by the teacher and inconsistency in the use of assessment. In the sixth form, some students struggle to make expected progress on Year 12 courses because they do not possess the appropriate level of independent study skills. Students' needs and interests are met well by the curriculum. Carefully planned developments have broadened the range of courses, which are tailored to meet the needs of a particular group of students. Students at risk of underperforming are quickly identified and effective support is put in place. Learning plans for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities identify specific needs and these are used well by teachers and assistants to inform the best approach to their learning.

The headteacher and senior managers provide strong and effective leadership with a clear focus on raising standards. The headteacher's clarity of vision, combined with rigorous self-evaluation and monitoring, give the college good capacity to continue to improve. Middle managers have become confident and skilled in using assessment data and taking successful action for improvement. Particularly effective action has been taken to raise the achievement of students of White British heritage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, illustrating the college's good promotion of equality.

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The headteacher has set high standards and high expectations for all who work at the college and she is supported very effectively by her teams of senior and middle leaders. This has generated a strong morale, a positive learning ethos and a firm desire to succeed. As a result, the college's vision to 'be happy, be ambitious and make a difference' is becoming a reality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that the very large majority of lessons are good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teaching consistently challenges all groups of learners
 - providing consistently clear advice and guidance to students through the day-to-day marking of their work on to how to accelerate their progress
 - developing students to be independent learners across all subjects.

- Increase the progress that students make at AS level by ensuring that those who enter the sixth form are equipped with the independent study skills required for learning at that level.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enter the college with attainment that is just below average and from their starting points they make good progress. The proportion of students who gain five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics has improved strongly over the past three years to just above average in 2011. The college's impressive tracking system suggests that this trend will continue. The college has been particularly effective this year at raising the attainment and progress of targeted students. The imbalances in progress of different groups of students in previous years have been addressed effectively. The difference in performance of White British students that existed in 2010 is closing as their progress has improved. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has also improved considerably due to the better arrangements that are now in place to diagnose and support students with specific learning needs. The large majority of lessons observed show that students have good attitudes to their work and the quality of learning is good. Students enjoy learning and say that they benefit from the good teaching that they receive. They support each other very effectively.

Students' behaviour around the college is almost always good despite having to move around and work in sometimes cramped and widely-spread accommodation. Instances of disruptive behaviour are rare and these instances have noticeably decreased this year with the reduction in the number of cover teachers used. However, occasionally in lessons there is a tendency for a few students to become passive, particularly if teachers are directing them too much. In discussion, all groups of students asserted that they felt safe in school and that instances of bullying are rare, can be reported easily and will be dealt with promptly.

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Students understand well the elements of a healthy lifestyle and many live up to them in their participation in the many college activities on offer. Students’ views played an important part in making the change to healthier school meals and the curriculum contributes positively to a greater understanding of their emotional health and well-being. All students have the opportunity to take on roles of responsibility or to make a contribution to the community beyond, including involvement in ‘Young Chamber’. The student council has been influential in some important college decisions.

Students are well prepared for the workplace. They attend well because they value the education they receive and its relevance to their lives. This is enhanced by good business and enterprise skills, developed through the ‘enterprise passport’. Basic skills including literacy are applied in a range of contexts. Students have a wide range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Common values are promoted and the very diverse communities that make up the college engage well together.

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	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

How effective is the provision?

Of the lessons observed during the inspection none were inadequate and around three-quarters were judged as good or better. This mirrors almost exactly the college’s own monitoring. A Common strength of teaching includes the well-structured planning to ensure that learning activities are pitched at the right level. Occasionally, students’ prior learning is not taken into account and students of higher

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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abilities do not make the progress of which they are capable. In some less effective lessons, too much teacher talk and direction restricts the development of independent study skills. Marking is usually developmental and constructive in tone, but occasionally marking is not always helpful in promoting students’ progress.

The college takes a flexible approach to designing its curriculum so as to meet the differing needs of its students. It is monitored closely and refined to ensure the best possible outcomes for students. The curriculum is geared to promote literacy across the school and arrangements in Year 7 ensure that students who need to accelerate their literacy skills are able to do so through tailored support. At Key Stage 3 some courses are condensed to enable early entry to GCSE and other examination courses with many gaining accreditation early, for example in information and communication technology (ICT). There is breadth of provision at Key Stages 4 and 5 with pathways available from entry level to level 4 where small numbers of students follow an Open University course in genetics. Vocational courses in ICT, business, health and social care and sport are popular and successful. Good use is made of partnerships with local colleges and schools. The business and enterprise specialism is seen to be instrumental in improving students’ personal development and well-being. Students have enhanced awareness of decision-making through working with entrepreneurs and the ‘enterprise passport’ encourages and promotes the empowerment of students as leaders and problem solvers.

Well-targeted support is offered to students in need, especially those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, for example through the different mentoring programmes. The evaluation of these programmes shows that students value them highly. The pastoral programme, delivered by tutors, covers a range of topics relevant to each year, culminating in well-organised support in choosing options in Year 9. Transitions are effectively supported and every student in Year 9 is interviewed to ensure appropriate choices at Key Stage 4 have been made. The impact of this care, guidance and support is evident in improved outcomes such as in the very low number of students leaving college not in education employment, or training, the rising attendance, improving behaviour and falling exclusions.

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 college has come through a challenging time. The temporary arrangements in college leadership have been resolved and leadership has been secured across the

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college; the previously low levels of achievement have been ameliorated and a positive learning culture has been established; managing the extensive site and buildings continues while the new building is constructed. The college is well-led and collaborative leadership and management is driving forward improvements. There are clear lines of accountability that enable senior leaders and directors of learning to ensure the smooth running of the college. The key priorities are shared with staff so that there is a clear agenda for raising standards and improving teaching. Target setting is well understood by staff and detailed tracking of students’ progress leads to effective interventions, such as that for White British boys, identified as an underachieving group. Directors of learning make a strong contribution to bringing about improvements. The college recognises that some subjects are more successful than others in securing consistently good achievement and is taking the appropriate steps. The leadership of teaching has been particularly effective in ensuring that all teachers have a good understanding of what constitutes high quality teaching and learning and targeted training and coaching programmes have been set up, informed by regular diagnostic monitoring. An intensive training programme, highly valued by staff, has improved teachers’ awareness and skills in supporting students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college and bring wide expertise to their work. They are increasingly involved in the life of the college, listen to and act on the views of the leadership team and of parents and carers, and are well placed to challenge the college and seek further improvement. The college has a positive relationship with parents. Their views are sought regularly and taken into account. There is high attendance at review days and the college’s provision of interpreters supports this.

The college has an extensive range of partners including industry and business links which contribute positively to the life of the college. The college is a highly valued contributor to higher education teacher training courses. Contributions from a range of outside agencies support students’ well-being. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and regularly reviewed by staff and governors through the work of the ‘safeguarding board’. The college is very committed in its focus on promoting the equality of opportunity for every student. The college is keenly aware of the nature of its community and has a range of strategies to promote understanding at local, national and global levels. It ensures that students from a wide range of backgrounds participate in these.

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

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The college’s inclusive sixth form provides well for its students. There is strong, clear leadership from the head of sixth form supported ably by a cohesive team of committed tutors and teachers. Achievement at A level is good with most students making good and some even better progress than could be expected given their starting points. Achievement at AS level is more variable and this is because some students lack the independent study skills they need for sixth form when they transfer from Year 11. There is strong support given to ensure that good progress is made through the very thorough system of tracking and any issues identified are quickly followed up by tutors and teachers. In most subjects, students progress well. However, in some subjects, students of higher abilities are not always challenged sufficiently to extend their learning. Students make particularly high gains in the applied courses that are available.

Particular strengths in lessons include high quality planning, probing questioning and strongly developed skills in assessment. For example, in an economics lesson students marked each others’ work using criteria, gave feedback to their peers and then the teacher reflected with them on what they had learned and gave more detailed feedback on how to improve. The curriculum is broad and flexible. It covers a wide range of academic and vocational courses. The curriculum content contributes well to entry into university or employment.

Students’ motivation in the sixth form is high. Students clearly enjoy the courses they are taking. Relationships are strong and students say they value the support they receive from all their teachers and tutors and particularly from the head of sixth form. There is strong support shown for any concerns raised by students. There is a clear focus on students taking responsibility for their own learning and future career choices. Guidance beyond the sixth form is strong, well organised, timely and welcomed by students. As a result, most proceed to destinations of their choice.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were generally positive about the education their children received at the college. Most of their views are in line with the judgements made by the inspectors. A small minority raised behaviour as a concern. Inspectors followed up these concerns: they found that the school has effective policies in place with regard to behaviour and procedures are followed consistently, which together contribute to the good behaviour of students in the college.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The City of Leicester 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 177 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1370 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	72	41	98	55	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	46	26	116	66	9	5	2	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	81	46	91	51	5	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	30	110	62	10	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	48	27	116	66	11	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	41	23	112	63	22	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	18	120	68	20	11	2	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)	44	25	109	62	8	5	2	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	19	128	72	5	3	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	24	107	60	17	10	9	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	21	105	59	18	10	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	51	29	111	63	7	4	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	60	34	113	64	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The City of Leicester College, Leicester, LE5 6LN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us during the inspection. We found it very helpful to talk to you, look at your work and visit your lessons. You helped us to understand what it is really like to be a student at your college. We were particularly pleased to see how you were managing to move around the college while arrangements were being made for the new building work.

Inspectors judge that you go to a good school with a good sixth form. Your college is improving at a steady pace. You make good progress in the main school and are now attaining just above average standards by the time you leave Year 11. This is because you are well taught and the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 meets your personal and academic needs well. Business and enterprise work is making a difference. It was good to see that many of you get involved in the enrichment activities such as the 'Young Chamber' that prepare you for the world of work. Your behaviour is good and you have very positive attitudes to learning. It was good to hear that the vast majority of you are attending regularly. We were most impressed with the pride you take in your college, the care that you have for each other and the way that you celebrate and promote your diverse cultures both in college and outside.

In the sixth form, you make good progress and get the results you need to go on to higher education, work or further training. However, we noticed that a number of you struggle to complete your courses at AS level because you need more help to study independently. We have asked the college to look into this and ensure that in future more of you make good progress and achieve the highest grades possible.

We have also asked the college to improve some aspects of teaching so that you are all challenged to produce your best, that you are able to work independently of your teachers more and that you always receive clear advice on how to improve your work. This is an area where you can help by making sure you act upon advice given, especially, when your work is marked.

I wish you all success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time at The City of Leicester College.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

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