

Alfreton Grange Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112931
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378609
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Hewitt HMI

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	624
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Kerry
Headteacher	Gail Giles
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
School address	Grange Street Alfreton DE55 7JA
Telephone number	01773 832331
Fax number	01773 832331
Email address	office@alfretongrange.derbyshire.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	28–29 November 2011
Inspection number	378609

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. One inspector focused on safeguarding for half a day. Inspectors observed 30 teachers in 30 lessons. One inspector also conducted a series of brief lesson visits. Meetings were held with groups of staff, students and the Chair of the Governing Body. One inspector met with representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed the college's work, and looked at the college's development plan, students' work, data and analysis, policy documents, the college's monitoring records and the minutes of the governing body meetings. They considered the responses to questionnaires from 62 parents and carers, 75 students and 46 members of staff.

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

- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in ensuring progress is satisfactory or better across all subjects, but especially English, mathematics and science.
- The consistency of teaching in meeting the needs of all groups of students, particularly girls, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and students who transfer into the college outside the usual times, so that they all make satisfactory or better progress.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in monitoring and accurately evaluating the college's performance to secure clear and sustained improvement.
- The effectiveness of leaders in improving the provision and outcomes for students in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Alfreton Grange Arts College is a smaller than average secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage although many other ethnic groups are represented. Very few students speak English as an additional language and all speak English fluently. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is double the national average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is also above the national average. The proportion of students transferring into the college other than at the usual times is above average. The college was designated as a specialist arts school in September 2008.

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

Alfreton Grange Arts College is a satisfactory school which is improving quickly. This is because of the secure improvements to the quality of teaching and leadership. Care and inclusion are central to the strength of the college and have had a clear effect in promoting better progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The work to support students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable is particularly strong. The college is a warm and friendly community in which students feel valued and safe. They help each other and forge strong relationships with adults. These strong bonds support secure attitudes for learning. Students' strong understanding of their responsibilities as citizens plays a key role in placing the college at the heart of the community. Students have taken on a sustained and effective role in raising money for the British Heart Foundation. They are active participants in providing a range of cultural events in the local community. This demonstrates the clear impact of the college's specialist status.

The college is emerging from a turbulent period during which there have been significant staffing issues and teaching was not of a good enough quality. In recent years, students have not made enough progress but senior leaders have taken a firm approach and progress is improving rapidly. Students who transfer into the college outside the usual times are supported very well. Consequently, they settle in quickly and make satisfactory progress. There remains some variability in the progress boys and girls make and across different subject areas, including English, mathematics and science. This unevenness is reducing, particularly for students in Key Stage 3. Students known to be eligible for free school meals, and the few students from minority ethnic heritages, also make satisfactory progress.

One of the reasons for the improvement in progress is that the quality of teaching has improved. There is a growing core of good teaching. Of the lessons inspectors observed, students' progress in over half was good. In these lessons, students are filled with enthusiasm and energy. This is because teachers plan carefully for the needs of individuals which helps to accelerate their progress. However, this is not consistent and while teachers prepare fully to address the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities it is not the case for other groups. For example, more-able students are often given work which does not offer them sufficient challenge.

Students listen carefully to their teachers and work steadily. They answer questions when they are prompted to do so but they frequently lack confidence in speaking at

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

length. This lack of confidence prevents them from accelerating their progress. When they are given the opportunity, students apply assessment criteria to their own work and that of others. This helps them to gain a clear understanding of the precise steps they need to take to improve their work. However, these opportunities are not systematically provided.

The determined headteacher, supported by other leaders and governors, has led the college to focus relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders know the college well because they have introduced secure systems to monitor the quality of lessons and to track students' progress carefully. The skills of middle leaders have improved. For example, in English, improvements are gathering pace because of the increasingly effective use teachers are making of assessment data. This has been strengthened by some recent appointments, including a leader of mathematics. These leaders are playing an increasingly effective role in checking on the quality of the college's work.

Improvement is evident in the sixth form too but this is not as strong as in the main school. The progress students make varies across different subjects. There is evidence of greater consistency and the current Year 12 and 13 students are making satisfactory progress.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Iron out the remaining inconsistencies between different groups of students so that they all make good progress by:
 - ensuring teachers plan and teach to meet the needs of individuals
 - providing increased challenge for more-able students.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching, including that in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring students have consistent opportunities to develop independence and engage in active learning
 - ensuring teachers' questioning provides frequent opportunities for students to develop confident speaking and listening skills
 - providing more consistent opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of each other.
- Accelerate the progress students make in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring teachers make effective use of the new assessment information in planning to meet students' needs
 - ensuring students understand the progress they have made and the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

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

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment on entry varies between different cohorts from average to below average. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, the large majority have gained five A* to C grades at GCSE. In the college's specialist subjects, students make good progress because they respond well to the independent and active learning tasks teachers provide for them. Progress in English and mathematics has been slower to improve and here, students' attainment remains below the national average. However, this is improving rapidly and the college's data demonstrate that the large majority of the current Year 10 and Year 11 are on track to gain five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. The college's robust data indicate students' progress is improving securely. Progress is especially strong in Key Stage 3. The variability in the progress different groups make across different years and across subjects is reducing quickly.

The quality of learning in lessons is satisfactory overall and this is also improving quickly. Students settle quickly and work steadily. In the good lessons, students respond well to teachers skilful questioning and this encourages them to think deeply about their work. For example in a good English lesson, Year 11 students developed sophisticated empathetic responses following the teacher's probing questioning. However, these opportunities are not consistent across the college. Students' progress also accelerates when they have access to clear assessment criteria and they are able to assess their own and each other's work. This is becoming increasingly common but is not fully consistent across all lessons.

Students behave well around the college. They have a keen sense of fair play. In lessons, students follow instructions but there are not always enough opportunities for them to develop independence and self-discipline. Students know how to stay healthy and generally adopt healthy lifestyles as demonstrated by the high number who take part in sporting activities. Attendance is in line with the national average. The number of students who regularly struggle to attend college has reduced. However, despite the college's best efforts, numbers remain higher than found nationally. Students' workplace skills are sound and almost all students go on to secure employment, further education or training.

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	4
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

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

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

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	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved rapidly and securely. Teachers plan a range of interesting tasks to engage students and this is supporting improvements in the progress they make. Lessons consistently support the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in a satisfactory textiles lesson, a student with special educational needs was given a step by step structure to support her in analysing the design of a pencil case. This, along with judicious questions from the teaching assistant, ensured she learned the basic skills of product analysis. Good teaching is becoming more commonplace and is typified by teachers encouraging collaboration and independence. However, there remains a significant core of teaching in which this is not the case and some students are not sufficiently challenged, albeit the teaching is satisfactory in other respects. In these lessons, the pace of learning is slower and teachers' expectations of the most able are not high enough to secure good progress. This is a current focus for the college.

The curriculum is well organised and it is particularly strong in providing tailored provision for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The college's status as a specialist arts college has enabled leaders to offer a variety of interesting and engaging courses at Key Stage 4. The college's good partnerships with other schools have broadened choices. For example, students make satisfactory and sometimes better progress in the vocational courses offered in collaboration with other schools.

The college offers good care, guidance and support to students. Detailed and systematic support is provided for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Careful planning enables new arrivals to settle in quickly and maximise their time at the college. Students are adamant that adults care greatly for them and they have faith that they will always take effective action to support them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
--------------------------------	----------

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

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by the recently restructured leadership team and governors, has been successful in focusing staff and students on improving the quality of learning and the progress students make. This, along with clear systems to accurately check on the quality of the college's work, demonstrates the college's satisfactory and improving capacity to sustain these improvements. New appointments have strengthened the quality of the work leaders and managers do. The college is acutely aware of remaining weaknesses. Recent developments are showing promising signs of improvement. For example, a recent group, established to raise attendance in Year 10, has already succeeded in improving the attendance of a targeted group of students. However, for many of these developments, it is too soon to fully evaluate their impact. Nevertheless, teachers are keen to improve their practice and inspectors were impressed with their enthusiasm in seeking feedback about the quality of their lessons.

The college uses a robust system to track students' progress. Senior and middle leaders have used the information to identify and address students' achievement. Consequently, the gaps between the progress made by different groups of students are reducing. The opportunities for all to succeed are sound. The arrangements to safeguard students are appropriate.

The college has a good understanding of its context. Leaders have been especially successful in using the specialist college status in promoting students' involvement with a variety of local, national and international groups. For example, students enjoy sharing their sporting achievements with links in Nigeria.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and	3

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

tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The progress students make from their low starting points is satisfactory overall. In recent years, results have been disappointing but the college has been successful in halting this decline. The variation between the progress students make in different subjects is closing, albeit modestly.

Students enjoy sixth form life and, for many, it equips them with the maturity and skills to be successful when they move on to other courses or employment. They are active members of the college community. For example, students develop their leadership skills by organising events to support charities and helping younger students develop their reading and writing skills.

Students benefit from good care, guidance and support. They speak warmly of the relationships they have with their teachers. The college offers valuable guidance and preparation for their next steps in life and, consequently, all students secure appropriate employment, further education or training. As in the main school, teaching is satisfactory and students learn best when they have a clear understanding of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their progress. Some teachers provide this feedback very well but it is not consistent. The curriculum is broad and soundly meets students' needs and aspirations.

Improvements to the leadership of the sixth form are relatively recent. A new system for collecting assessment information has been introduced and is showing early signs of helping teachers to accelerate progress. Some teachers use this information effectively to tailor their lessons precisely to meet the individual needs of students. However, this is not a common approach.

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

As in the previous inspection, the response rate to the questionnaire was low. The

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

large majority of parents and carers who responded agreed with all the statements. A few raised concerns about the extent to which the college helps them to support their children's learning and the extent to which the college takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions. Inspectors found that the college recognise these are areas which are underdeveloped. Leaders are in the early stages of improving the college's work with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alfreton Grange 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 624 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	32	25	66	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	26	25	66	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	18	25	66	5	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	24	26	68	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	6	16	25	66	4	11	2	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	24	17	45	11	29	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	24	18	47	8	21	1	3
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)	15	39	15	39	4	11	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	32	16	42	9	24	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	32	18	47	4	11	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	21	19	50	7	18	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	7	18	23	61	7	18	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	37	15	39	8	21	1	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	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.



30 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Alfreton Grange Arts College, Alfreton, DE55 7JA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your college recently. We found it very helpful to talk to you, look at your work and visit your lessons. There are some things that the college does well.

- All the teachers and adults help you to feel safe and adopt healthy lifestyles.
- You all make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and this is improving quickly.
- The work leaders and managers are doing with the college's partners is also improving the college quickly.
- The college's specialist status is providing you with lots of opportunities to develop as responsible citizens.

Senior leaders and all the staff want the college to be even better so we have asked them to do the following things.

- Make sure you all make equally good progress by ensuring teachers plan lessons to meet everybody's needs, especially more able students.
- Increase the number of good lessons by giving you practical activities that help you to develop independent learning skills. They should also make sure all lessons give you the opportunity to develop confident speaking and listening skills.
- Accelerate the progress students make in the sixth form by making sure all teachers use your assessment information to plan work that is exactly right for you. They should also make sure you know what you are doing well and what you need to do to improve your learning.

You can all play your part in making sure the college continues to improve quickly by attending college every day and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**