

The Latimer Arts College

Castle Way, Barton Seagrave, Kettering, NN15 6SW

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in a wide range of subjects. The proportion of students who have achieved five or more good GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics has been above average for the past three years.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress in both Year 12 and Year 13.
- All groups of students make good progress, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- Teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. In most subjects, teachers set challenging work that helps students improve their skills and understanding.
- The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is good both in lessons and at break times. They attend college regularly and are punctual.
- Students feel safe at the college and they have an excellent understanding of safety issues.
- Leaders and managers, including governors and progress leaders, have worked together diligently to ensure that both achievement and teaching have improved since the previous inspection in 2012.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding which means that students do not always make the rapid progress that they are capable of, particularly in Key Stage 3 and for some more-able students.
- Leaders do not keep a close enough check on students' achievement in Key Stage 3.
- A small minority of students are not always attentive in lessons, particularly when teaching is not as good as it should be.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, 14 of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. The inspection team also made several short visits to other lessons to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of students.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students from all year groups. Other meetings were held with governors, senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed 48 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 32 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the work of the college and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the college’s improvement plan and data on students’ progress.
- Inspectors listened to some Year 7 students reading.
- Inspectors were only able to observe two sixth form lessons as students were taking examinations during the two days that the inspection took place. Inspectors were able to have discussions with sixth form students, look a range of sixth form students’ work, examine records relating to the monitoring of sixth form teaching and analyse achievement data.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynn Williams	Additional Inspector
William Cassell	Additional Inspector
Alan Jones	Additional Inspector
Christopher Teal	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The college is larger than the average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic heritages is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to schools for certain groups such as students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is below average.
- The college does not use any alternative provision.
- The college collaborates with two other schools in the sixth form so that a wider range of subjects are available to students. It is also part of the Pilgrim Learning Trust, which is a group of schools who work closely with each other.
- The college has specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs. It caters for up to seven students who have hearing impairments.
- The college has specialist status in performing arts.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement in the main school and the sixth form so that more is outstanding by ensuring:
 - all teachers plan work which helps students to consistently make rapid progress throughout lessons, particularly in the case of more able students and students in Key Stage 3
 - homework is set regularly in all subjects and is designed to make students think really hard so that they extend the learning they have undertaken in class
 - teachers of all subjects make sure students learn from the mistakes that have been pinpointed by their marking
 - teachers encourage all students to develop the same good attitudes to learning in their lessons that are consistently shown by the majority by making sure that they are attentive in all lessons.
- Improve the impact that leaders and managers have on achievement in Key Stage 3 by monitoring student's progress more systematically.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the college with average attainment. By the time they complete Year 11 the majority make good progress. Consequently, for the past three years, the proportion of students who have achieved five or more good GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been above average.
- By the time they leave, the progress that students make in both English and mathematics is good. In 2013, the proportion of students who made the progress expected of them in English was similar to the national average, as was the proportion of students who made more rapid progress. In mathematics, a much higher proportion of students made the progress that is expected of them than nationally and the proportion who made more rapid progress was close to the national average.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs, students from minority ethnic heritages and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. The college works very effectively to ensure that these students have the same opportunities to be successful as the others. This is because teachers and learning support assistants are skilful in providing activities which are appropriately challenging.
- Students who are supported in the specially resourced unit make good progress. School leaders maintain a careful check on this provision and its impact on students' needs as well as their achievement. These students spend most of their time in mainstream lessons and teachers make sure that the needs of these students are met well, particularly in helping them to develop their speech and language skills.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. In 2013, a higher than average proportion passed their AS and A level courses. Although the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is below average, the proportion of those that do, is increasing.
- The college spends the pupil premium in a variety of ways, for example on additional staff so that students benefit from working in smaller classes. Students of all abilities who are supported through the pupil premium make good progress and the college is successfully closing the gap between the achievement of these students and their classmates. This year, eligible students in Year 11 achieved, on average, a quarter of a grade below other students in English and half a grade below in mathematics. This is better than the difference found nationally in both subjects.
- A small number of students are supported through additional Year 7 catch-up funding, which helps students who join the college with attainment below the expected levels in English and mathematics. The college uses this funding effectively to provide eligible students with additional one-to-one mathematics and reading tuition. Most students are quickly catching up with their peers and many make very good progress.
- The college enters some students for GCSE mathematics before the end of Year 11. In the past this has not been an effective strategy as it has not fully supported the more-able students in achieving the highest grades. However, the college has changed its approach to early-entry this year and this is proving more effective. All students, including the more-able, are now required to demonstrate rapid progress in mathematics before they are allowed to have extra lessons in other subjects instead or begin studying A level mathematics early.

- More-able students generally make the same good progress as other students. However,

occasionally, this is not the case because the work they are set is not challenging enough.

- Students generally make expected progress in Key Stage 3. However, only a small proportion makes more rapid progress by the time they reach the end of the key stage.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall and sometimes it is outstanding. It has been improving steadily since the previous inspection in 2012 and it is continuing to improve. This is the main reason why achievement is good.
- Good teaching is typically underpinned by highly positive relationships that exist between teachers and students. Most teachers have a good understanding of students' levels of attainment and use this information well to plan work which students enjoy and find appropriately challenging.
- In the most successful lessons, students take full responsibility for how their learning will move forward. In a Year 10 drama lesson, the students doing this developed their practical and theoretical skills and understanding to a high level. They thoroughly enjoyed the lesson, valued the responsibility and guidance given to them and took great pride in their achievements.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use effectively so that students are able to make good progress in lessons. A particular strength in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is teacher's detailed knowledge of examination requirements, which they use to help students make good progress towards achieving their target grades.
- Most marking is clear and helpful. However, in a minority of subjects, teachers do not ensure students improve their work as a result of the teachers' marking.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of what students are capable of achieving and this makes a significant contribution to the good progress which they make. However, teaching does not always ensure that students make rapid progress because sometimes the work is not always as demanding as it should be. This happens more frequently in Key Stage 3 and for some of the more-able students.
- The vast majority of teachers plan homework which helps students to extend their understanding and skills well. However, there are some inconsistencies between subjects. Sometimes homework does not help students to develop their learning from class sufficiently because it is either not set regularly or is not demanding enough for the more able students.
- In some subjects, teachers have not established the same good attitudes to learning in a small minority of students that are consistently seen in the vast majority. These students make slower progress than they are capable of because they are not as attentive as they should be.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and at break times is good. Students work well with each other and they show high levels of respect for their peers and their teachers. This results in the positive relationships which support the good teaching and learning in the college and which are

promoted well across all year groups through the college council and through the mixed-age tutor groups.

- Students dress smartly and they are proud to be students at the college. They recognise and appreciate the good teaching and personal support that they receive from staff.
- The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning and these positive attitudes make a strong contribution to students' good achievement. Students are keen to work hard and try their best. In addition, large numbers of students are enthusiastic about taking part in the wide and diverse range of performing arts activities which are provided for them. In many respects students attitudes to learning exemplify the college motto of 'Learn, Achieve, Create'.
- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Regular safety themes in assembly as well as various performing arts activities reinforce the importance of keeping safe and students value these. Students feel safe at college and they have a strong understanding of safety issues, including how to keep safe when working online.
- Bullying is rare at the college. When bullying incidents do occur, students are confident that staff will deal with matters swiftly. Students have a clear understanding of the various forms of bullying. Consequently, they are well-equipped with the appropriate skills to manage such situations should they happen. Older students take responsibility to support younger ones and act as peer mentors at lunchtime. These students have been appropriately trained to provide this support and they value the responsibility given to them.
- Students in the sixth form behave well and those who inspectors spoke to were also proud of their college. They value the opportunities which are offered to them to take responsibility and contribute to the positive college ethos.
- Attendance is good and the college is successfully reducing the number of students who regularly miss school.
- Overall, behaviour and safety are not outstanding because, occasionally, where teaching is not as good as it should be, a small minority of students do not show the same good attitudes to learning in some subjects as the vast majority of students do.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, very well supported by a strong and effective team of senior leaders and governors, has significantly improved both teaching and achievement since the previous inspection. Her leadership has ensured that the vast majority of staff, students and parents are fully supportive of the college's vision to 'secure outstanding achievements for each individual child'. She has created a college ethos where teachers are able to develop their teaching and work collaboratively so that students' achievement is good and improving.
- Procedures for checking on the college's performance are regular and rigorous and as a result of this leaders are able to accurately assess the colleges' strengths and weaknesses. This informs the college improvement plan, which focuses on the most important areas of weakness. Where aspects of teaching fall short of college leaders' high expectations, immediate and effective action is taken to tackle any underperformance, as for example, in two subjects which were underachieving in the past. However, leaders and managers have not been as successful in ensuring that students in Key Stage 3 or in the case of some of the more-able students make consistently rapid progress because they have not monitored achievement here as rigorously as

they have in other key stages.

- Leaders are committed to making sure that all students benefit from outstanding teaching. Consequently, the leadership of teaching is highly effective in helping teachers to improve their practice through regular and varied opportunities to train, work with other colleagues and share good practice. Staff appreciate these opportunities.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders have a good impact on sixth form achievement and this has improved considerably in recent years. Leaders have put in place more robust systems for checking on students' progress and this ensures that any under achievement is identified early. They ensure students' choices of courses are carefully matched to their GCSE qualifications. The school's collaboration with two other sixth forms means students have a wide range of subjects to choose from. Consequently, a higher proportion of students than average stays in the sixth form for the full two years and achievement, overall, is good. The proportion of student's achieving the highest grades, although below average, is improving.
- The school has reviewed its provision to ensure it meets the expectations of the new 16-19 Study Programme and provides appropriate courses for students who are now required to stay in school until they are 18 years of age. Currently, this applies to very few students in the school; the attainment profile of this year's entry group into the sixth form is not markedly different to that of previous year-groups.
- The strong and effective group of progress leaders who manage subjects have the same high expectations of teachers and students as senior leaders. They are a highly skilled group of leaders who effectively hold teachers to account for standards as well as make sure that teachers are well supported to continuously improve their teaching. Progress leaders benefit from good support from senior leaders through regular opportunities to share their practice in the college and in other schools.
- The curriculum provides students with a wide range of activities and subjects which foster students' generally good attitudes to learning and promote good behaviour. Numerous extra-curricular activities, as well as trips and visits, enhance the curriculum very well. For example, the school has used the opportunities created by its performing arts specialism very effectively to develop students' performing and technical skills as well as developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through multicultural themed performances. A large number of students choose to take part in these activities. The curriculum, combined with good teaching, ensures that students are well prepared for their next stage in education, employment and training.
- From Year 8, students have access to good independent advice and guidance regarding their future careers. For students in Years 9 to 13 there is very good support to help students make informed decisions about examination subject choices as well as further and higher education, employment and training opportunities. The college is rightly proud that all students that have left in recent years have secured a place in further or higher education, training or employment.
- All teachers are set targets to improve their teaching and guide decisions about pay increases. High-quality training enables them to work towards achieving their targets, and so further improve their teaching skills and the achievement of students.
- The work of the Principal with and across the learning trust is having a positive impact on teaching and achievement because staff have opportunities to work together to improve their teaching and leadership skills.

- The local authority monitors the college's performance and it has rightly judged that a 'light touch' approach is appropriate as college leaders have a good ability to improve the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body knows the most important strengths and weaknesses of the college because many governors understand student achievement data well. Governors make sure that the governing body holds the college leadership effectively to account for standards. Governors know that the more-able students do not always have opportunities to make more rapid progress. They agree that they need more detailed information about achievement in Key Stage 3.
- The governing body has high expectations of all staff and students and it is fully aware of how underperformance is tackled. All governors are linked to subjects and they visit the college regularly so that they know what teaching is like.
- Relevant governors robustly monitor how the college spends the additional Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding. They know how much funding the college receives, how it is spent and the good value for money which is achieved.
- Governors know how targets are set to help improve teachers' performance and they are appropriately involved in making decisions about whether staff should receive pay rises in relation to them meeting their targets.
- Since the previous inspection governors have worked successfully to help the school improve numbers in the sixth form.
- Governors constantly evaluate the school's impact and look for ways to improve it further. For example, recently the governing body conducted a 'skills audit' so that it could prioritise the next phase of improvements.
- Governors have made sure that the college fulfils its responsibilities regarding safeguarding; all staff have been checked as required and are trained appropriately to keep students safe and free from harm.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122066
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	425056

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	1019
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	126
Appropriate authority	The Governing body
Chair	Sue Wood
Principal	Siobhan Hearne
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
Telephone number	01536 720300
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