

INSPECTION REPORT

SAWSTON VILLAGE COLLEGE

Sawston, Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110902

Headteacher: Mr K. McMullen

Reporting inspector: Mr D. R. Bolton
001204

Dates of inspection: 7th – 9th November 2000

Inspection number: 223788

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P. Stanton

Date of previous inspection: March 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sawston Village College is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school with 1087 pupils on roll (larger than average for the type of school). It is a technology college. It is also a “village college”, with a strong commitment to community education. It serves a semi-rural area, south of Cambridge, an area of relative social and educational advantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities is low. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is slightly above average, although none are at the early stages of language acquisition. Pupils’ attainment on entry covers a wide range from very high to very low, with a rising number of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and an above average percentage of pupils with statements of special needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sawston Village College is a very good school. It achieves high standards. Pupils’ personal development is very well catered for. Teaching is very good, inspiring pupils to develop positive attitudes to their learning, both in lessons and beyond the classroom. Leadership and management are very good, with a commitment to raising achievement and continuous improvement. The college’s strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. It gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good teaching leads to effective learning and to pupils achieving standards well above average.
- The college offers very good provision in the performing arts, particularly in music, where it is outstanding, and achieves high standards in this area.
- There are rich opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom, helped by the fact that the school is a community college.
- The college is very successful in promoting pupils’ personal development. This is underpinned by the very good relationships at all levels.
- The very good leadership of the Principal and Governing Body, with its focus on raising achievement, evaluating performance and planning for improvement, gives the college an agenda for continuous improvement.
- The college caters very well for pupils with special educational needs or who are facing other difficulties. As a result, they make very good progress.

What could be improved

- Results in science at GCSE are not as good as in other subjects and not as good as they should be.
- Pupils miss out because the college does not teach religious education to all pupils in Years 10 and 11, as the law requires, and because pupils do not have a daily act of collective worship.
- Although pupils have many opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT), and although there are clear plans for further development, the teaching and assessment of this subject are not yet as well co-ordinated as they should be.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors’ action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made good progress and significant improvements since its last inspection in March 1995. Over recent years, standards have been well above average, in spite of a dip this summer. High levels of attendance have been maintained. The college has gained Technology College status. The proportion of satisfactory or better teaching has increased. The college has tackled systematically and effectively the key issues from the last inspection. It has taken appropriate action to bring about considerable improvements in the curriculum, in provision for special educational needs, in the way pupils’ attainment is assessed and their progress tracked, and in the way the college accounts for its performance and plans improvement. There have been major improvements to the accommodation, although more needs to be done and further important building projects are in hand. Provision for

information and communication technology has been greatly improved, but teaching and assessment of ICT still need to be better co-ordinated.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Over recent years, pupils in the college have done very well in tests and examinations, both at age 14 and at age 16. The college's results have been well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. They have shown an improving trend broadly in line with the trend nationally. This summer (2000), there was a dip in the results, and the college fell short of the challenging targets it had set, although the results remain above the average. Standards are high in most subjects, but pupils do particularly well in music, drama and English literature. In science, standards are not as high as in most other subjects, and this year GCSE results in science fell to around the national average, helping to account for the overall dip in the college's results. Overall, standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. Pupils in the college achieve very well, and their time at the college adds value.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to the college and to their work. They contribute to, and benefit from, the rich provision made for them, have high levels of commitment to their learning and respond very well to the high expectations the college has of them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally good. Pupils move about the campus with concern for others and their environment. However, while most behave very well in class, in a small minority of lessons, where teaching fails to motivate, pupils' behaviour deteriorates and is not as good as it should be. The rate of permanent exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	The college successfully promotes high standards of personal development. Older pupils show great maturity in their concern and support for younger pupils. Pupils work very well together and enjoy highly productive relationships with teachers and other adults, based on mutual respect. These positive relationships enable pupils to benefit from the very good quality of teaching and learning provided for them.
Attendance	Attendance is very high and is carefully and systematically monitored.

Pupils' attitudes and personal development are very good. Pupils take their work seriously. They benefit from being part of a lively and caring community, and are prepared to contribute to the life of the college. Relationships are very good indeed. Behaviour is generally good for most pupils. Attendance is very high compared with the picture nationally.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching was satisfactory or better in 98% of the lessons inspected. It was very good or excellent in 43% of lessons. It was less than satisfactory in only one lesson. During the inspection, the teaching of English was very good, the teaching of mathematics was good; the teaching of science was satisfactory overall. Literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively. There were very good or excellent lessons in many subjects, but the teaching of music and religious education was outstanding. The best teaching generated excitement and enjoyment and created a real "buzz" of intellectual stimulation and learning among pupils of all abilities. Most lessons are characterised by teachers' technical expertise in their subject, their understanding of how to put it across, and very good relationships. In the very small amount of teaching that was less than satisfactory, pupils were not made to work and behave well enough. Overall, the teaching takes good account of the wide range of pupils' needs. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn well and make very good progress. The quality of teaching is a key reason for the high standards achieved.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils receive a rich and balanced curriculum, which is greatly enhanced by the college's community provision and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Music is outstanding. The lack of religious education for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the way ICT is co-ordinated and assessed are weaknesses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The college caters very well for its pupils with special educational needs, and as a result these pupils make very good progress. It is particularly good at improving literacy for younger pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is a major strength. It comes through teachers' example, the values they promote, and through their teaching in subjects across the curriculum, as well as through the excellent opportunities for learning and for cultural development beyond the classroom.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is good. The college goes out of its way to help and guide pupils of all abilities, to monitor and improve their performance, and to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Arrangements for child protection are good.

The college provides a rich, well-balanced curriculum, but it fails to teach religious education to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities in the performing arts are very good, particularly in music, where they are outstanding. Opportunities for extending learning beyond the classroom are very good indeed. The college is a caring organisation. Staff work hard, and to good effect, to meet the needs of all pupils and to see that pupils with difficulties can take advantage of what is provided.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The Principal provides very strong, effective leadership, which has at its heart a commitment to the highest standards for all in both personal development and academic work. Key staff understand and share this common goal.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good range of ways to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the college. They know its strengths and weaknesses and, together with the Principal, have developed clear and appropriate plans for development. However, they do not ensure that religious education is taught to all pupils in Years 10 and 11, as the law requires, or that all pupils have a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is already very good and is continuing to improve. The Principal, governors and staff monitor performance in a wide range of ways, so that they have a clear idea of how well the college is doing, know what needs to be done in order to improve further, and how to go about it.
The strategic use of resources	The college has been very successful in managing resources to secure improvement within difficult financial constraints. Although there is currently a modest deficit, this has occurred in a planned way.

The very good leadership provided by the Principal and Governing Body has a clear focus on raising achievement, evaluating performance and planning improvement. It creates a climate in which pupils are keen and able to learn and provides a thrust for continuing improvement. There is a readiness to acknowledge weaknesses as well as strengths, to face challenges and to see how things might be done more effectively or more efficiently. In this climate, best value principles are applied well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • They feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem. • The teaching is good. • Their children make good progress. • Pupils like school. • The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. • Provision in the performing arts, especially music, is of high quality. • Staff show respect for pupils and work hard to get the best out of them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are concerned about behaviour in the college. • Some parents do not believe their children get the right amount of work to do at home. • Some parents feel that they are not kept well informed about how their child is getting on. • Some parents do not believe the college works closely enough with parents.

The great majority of parents believe that the college serves their children well and achieves high standards. Inspectors' findings support these positive views. They found that behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the college. However, while most pupils behave very well in class, in a small minority of lessons, where teaching fails to motivate, pupils' behaviour deteriorates. The college has a sensible homework policy, although this is not always applied consistently by individual teachers. The college has an articulate and very supportive, but not uncritical parent body. The college works hard to involve parents and to strengthen further its partnership with them, taking full account of their views, and keeps parents informed about their children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good teaching leads to effective learning and to pupils achieving standards well above average.

1. Pupils at Sawston Village College benefit from a good deal of lively, enthusiastic teaching that succeeds in arousing their interest, making learning an exciting and enjoyable experience. Most teachers have an infectious love of their subject, which they communicate well to their pupils. As a result, pupils sense the value of what they are doing. They respond by taking work very seriously and working with high levels of commitment. Many of them relish the intellectual challenge and stimulation. They are keen to learn, to improve their performance and to achieve well. This is a key to the high standards seen in much of the work and to the college's track record of good results. During the inspection, there were very good or excellent lessons in many subjects, but the teaching of music and religious education was outstanding. A number of strengths emerge in much of the teaching in the college, which help to explain why pupils at Sawston achieve as they do.

2. Two features that stand out are teachers' high level of expertise in their subject and the high expectations they have of their pupils. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and know how to put it across. This, coupled with enthusiasm for their subject, inspires pupils' confidence. Most teachers are clear, not just about what needs to be covered, but about what to do to help pupils improve. They are good at anticipating potential pitfalls and misunderstandings, and at providing the technical insights that will push pupils' performance beyond the ordinary or merely "acceptable". They expect high levels of interest, effort, concentration and success, and most pupils respond to the challenge, wanting to do well and taking a pride in what they achieve. This creates a climate where learning matters.

3. A good example of this was a Year 11 music lesson aimed at helping pupils develop their aural skills. The teacher's evident verve and passion for the subject, and her assumption that this would be shared by her pupils, set a tone of commitment and professional attention to detail that was readily taken up by the class. Pupils threw themselves into the work, which was conducted at a brisk pace. Revision of intervals (tonic – sub-dominant – dominant) led to a pupil spotting a link with African music they had recently studied. In view of pupils' interest and enthusiasm, it seemed natural to take the opportunity for a quick impromptu performance of the piece, involving part singing by the whole class. This was carried out with confidence, enjoyment and panache, and was used to reinforce the teaching point. In the subsequent aural practice, which many pupils found very challenging, the teacher balanced an insistence on accuracy and technical precision with a good range of practical strategies to help pupils of all abilities find a way through what was required of them. High standards were never compromised, and pupils were encouraged to draw on their theoretical and practical knowledge and their ability to evaluate. Pupils for whom this aspect of the work did not come easily, were helped to make real progress and to recognise the value of what they had learned. At the same time, others in the group achieved very high standards.

4. Another strength of most teaching is effective, probing questioning which helps pupils to think for themselves, challenging them to refine their ideas and understanding, and opening the door to new insights. In a Year 11 English lesson, pupils were taken through a clear analytical process for looking at a written text and taught appropriate techniques. The teacher built on pupils' contributions, and his carefully focused follow-up questions helped them to see that the writer's purpose and style might change within a passage, and to work out why. Pupils were challenged to be more precise, to justify their opinions and to consider alternative

interpretations. There was a high level of involvement and a real “buzz” of intellectual stimulation. Pupils learned a great deal and showed a very good understanding of the writer’s intention, of the structure of the text, and of the use of stylistic and literary devices. Similarly, in a history lesson on the Berlin airlift, it was the teacher’s effective questioning that brought all pupils into the discussion and helped them to explore some complex ideas. Pupils were helped to raise questions for themselves. They were fully involved and showed interest and excitement as they researched the conditions in a divided Berlin. Pupils of a wide range of attainment achieved very well in this lesson. In an effective revision lesson in science with lower attaining pupils, the teacher was skilful at using questions to draw out from pupils what they had learnt previously but found difficult to recall or express. They were helped to make connections and see how things fitted together. This was done in a firm, insistent way that encouraged pupils to believe that they could and would succeed.

5. Teaching in the college is also marked by very good relationships and, in most lessons, very effective management of pupils. Teachers show respect for pupils and place trust in them, treating them in an adult manner, as partners in learning. Pupils respond well and organise themselves in a mature way. In drama lessons, for example, pupils are expected to work in groups, rehearsing their performances. The teacher trusts them to organise their work, to make economical use of the time and to evaluate their own progress with a critical eye. This they do very well. Pupils of all abilities act responsibly, working with considerable commitment and initiative. They work well together, without awkwardness or embarrassment. When the teacher works with them on technical points, to help them improve their physical or vocal performance, they are keen to go away and apply what they have learnt to their group practice. As a result, pupils make very good progress and high standards are achieved. In a Year 11 physical education lesson using the trampoline, pupils took a very mature approach to coaching one another, helping identify ways in which performance could be improved. In a Year 7 music lesson, pupils practised their musical compositions in readiness for a performance, which was to be recorded on video for later viewing and evaluation. They were trusted to work in small groups in various practice rooms and other available spaces. There was a strong sense of mutual respect between teacher and pupils. Pupils were quite clear what was expected of them, and the routines and procedures for this sort of work were very well established. The pupils were totally absorbed in their work. Their behaviour was impeccable. They quickly took on board the teacher’s well-judged suggestions about how their work could be improved. The teacher’s records showed just how much progress pupils have made in the short time they have been at the college.

6. Another reason for the teaching leading to high standards of work is that lessons are well planned and teachers are very clear about what they expect their pupils to learn. In a Year 9 religious education lesson, an excellent lesson plan ensured a clear sequence for learning. Activities had been carefully devised to involve all pupils, to stimulate their thinking and to build up key knowledge, understanding and skills in an economical way. The teacher used a wide range of teaching methods and resources which were just right for the aims of the lesson. There were frequent checks to see how far the learning objectives were being met. Pupils were given regular oral feedback throughout the lesson on the quality and standard of oral and written work. There was a brisk, purposeful start to the lesson and pupils knew where they were going. Time was used to good effect and there was a sense of urgency. Pupils learned at a rapid pace. The lesson made high demands on pupils’ creative thinking and challenged them to reflect on their own experience. Pupils were challenged to erect hypotheses and to test them. They showed very good knowledge and understanding of the principal characteristics of three major faiths, and of their teaching on key matters such as prayer, worship, behaviour and rites of passage. Lessons of this calibre help explain the high levels of motivation and the very good learning and achievement which are prevalent in the college.

7. Effective use of day-to-day assessment in the classroom is another feature of the good teaching in the college. Most teachers have a clear picture of what individual pupils know and can do. They are good at using this knowledge to identify just what pupils need to do next in order to improve and at targeting their teaching to achieve this. This is at the heart of the college's success in music and drama, for example. In a GNVQ (ICT) lesson, pupils were given very clear feedback about how they had performed, a good insight into what would be needed to attain a higher standard, and helpful guidance as to how to get there. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, which was rightly conducted at a very fast pace for a class of high attaining pupils, the teacher was quick to spot pupils' misconceptions and was very skilled at giving them individual help as they worked. In a Year 9 games lesson in which the girls were playing hockey, the teacher took every opportunity to coach and to provide timely, concise advice that helped individuals improve their game, following a clear progression of skills that had been taught over a sequence of lessons.

8. Thanks to the quality of the teaching they receive and to their own positive attitudes to their work, pupils learn well in Sawston Village College. Their interest and willingness to apply themselves are backed up by the support they receive from the staff of the college, who track their progress carefully. The college has a rigorous process for doing this and for analysing test and examination results. Measures of value added show that pupils make better progress in their learning in almost all subjects during their time in the college than is the case nationally. The work seen during the inspection shows very good achievement across the ability range. Overall, standards are well above average, as the college's test and examination record over recent years has demonstrated.

9. Over recent years, the college has done very well in both the national tests for 14 year olds and public examinations at age 16. Results at age 14 have been well above the national average and above average for similar colleges. Both boys and girls have performed well above average, but girls nevertheless outperform boys. (Taken overall, girls are about one term ahead of the boys.) There are relative variations between the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science from year to year. For example, last year, English results were particularly good, whereas this year they were less so, but still above average; on the other hand, science results at age 14 improved this year. At age 16, in the four years 1996-1999, results were well above the national average and well above average for similar colleges. Again, both boys and girls performed consistently well above the national average, but girls continued to outperform boys. Standards are high in most subjects, but pupils do particularly well in music, drama and English literature. In 2000, results dipped, although they remain above average. Girls' results were not as high as they have been in previous years. Although the college is close to its published target in terms of average GCSE grade, it fell below in terms of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades and slightly below in terms of those gaining five or more A*-G grades. The standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that the college's published targets for the coming year are achievable.

The college offers very good provision in the performing arts, particularly in music, where it is outstanding, and achieves high standards in this area.

10. The college has a long tradition of fostering pupils' interest and opportunities in music. Music has a high profile in the college, and pupils and parents see it as a particular strength – one which is justly recognised in the wider community. Provision for music is outstanding. The teaching of music is excellent. Teachers are ambitious, and have very high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and of the important contribution music can make to their lives. They go beyond the confines of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. Their teaching inspires pupils. They communicate their enthusiasm and passion for the subject very effectively. In lessons, pupils of all abilities are engrossed in their work, enjoy it, and

achieve very well indeed. Not surprisingly, a good number of pupils choose to take music as a GCSE subject, representing a wide cross-section of musical ability. Although classes in Years 10 and 11 are large for a practical subject like music, standards are consistently high, as GCSE results show. Pupils show dedication and commitment, regularly signing up to additional tuition sessions outside lesson time, a factor contributing to the excellent results.

11. Music is not confined to lessons. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to join with others in making music, for example in full orchestra, junior and senior string orchestras, wind band, jazz band, brass ensemble, folk fiddle group, recorder group, senior madrigal group, not to mention other groups and ensembles which form themselves from time to time. Each lunchtime, the college is alive with music practices and rehearsals. Rehearsals are characterised by the high level of concentration, commitment and involvement, and the professional standard of discipline. There is a good balance between opportunities that are open to all, encouraging maximum participation, where capable musicians play alongside relative novices, and groups that are formed by audition, that pupils can aspire to, where standards are undeniably high. One such group is the senior madrigal group. In one lunchtime rehearsal during the inspection, members of this group tackled a new piece, sight-reading, unaccompanied, in four parts, performing to a high standard. Teachers work closely with the team of peripatetic music teachers who provide regular instrumental tuition to some 170 pupils in the college. A further 100 pupils have instrumental tuition outside the college. The college stages an annual music concert in Cambridge, in which 250-300 pupils take part. Pupils are encouraged and invited to take part in regular music workshops and events outside the college. Pupils have had opportunities in recent months to join in performances in Ely Cathedral and the Royal Albert Hall. Not surprisingly, the college is very well represented in County youth music activities.

12. There are good opportunities in drama, which is taught to all pupils in Years 8 and 9, and is taken as a GCSE subject by a good number of pupils in Years 10 and 11. The subject is popular and has status within the college. It calls for, and gets, considerable commitment from pupils in rehearsal time outside normal school hours. The subject is well taught and pupils achieve high standards. Each year, pupils perform their work to live audiences. The college achieves very good results in drama at GCSE. Pupils representing a wide range of attainment benefit from the work they do in drama and from the wider opportunities both to see and to take part in performances both locally and further afield, including working alongside professional actors. Because Sawston is a village college, they have particularly good opportunities to perform in community youth and adult productions.

There are rich opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom, helped by the fact that the school is a community college.

13. Parents are rightly appreciative of the wide range of opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. This is a noteworthy feature of the college. In the first place, teachers work hard to make their subjects come alive and to make sure that their pupils experience something more than book-based learning. For example, in English, pupils have taken part in the *Young Writers' Future Voices* competition (with the work of 35 pupils in Years 7 and 8 being accepted for publication), besides marking *World Book Day* and holding a *Readathon* to raise money for charity. There are regular theatre visits, workshops and films to help pupils in English, drama and modern languages. Pupils have won awards in *Maths Challenge*. In religious education, pupils were encouraged to take part in the national *Millennium Prayer* challenge, and the Eastern Region finalist was a pupil from Sawston, with a prayer on the theme of peace and the hopes of young people. Work in history marked the new millennium with a range of projects including a time capsule and a photo-record of a school day. In science, older pupils have been able to take advantage of the launch of a European atmospheric probe to put their own experiment on board. Pupils from the college have taken

part in a design and technology challenge day.

14. There are regular field trips and visits, for example in the humanities, science, art and vocational education. There is an annual French exchange and visits to France, Spain and Germany. There are good links with local industries, which are used in the curriculum, and a good programme of work-related learning and work experience. The college's annual activities week provides pupils with an interesting selection of wider challenges and learning opportunities, including residential experiences in this country and abroad. (Indeed, the college has set a target to provide a residential learning experience for 85% of pupils during their time in Years 7-9, by the end of 2001.)

15. In addition to the excellent extra-curricular activities in music and drama, there is an on-going programme of wide-ranging opportunities in physical education and sport. Pupils achieve well in this area, with very good GCSE results and a good record of individual and team achievements, thanks to good teaching by specialist staff and good facilities. This is backed up by a strong tradition of additional practices, team games and sports fixtures. The college has achieved the *Sportsmark* award. The extensive facilities of the community sports centre (soon to be enhanced further) make it possible for pupils to take part in a wide range of team games and also to pursue activities such as badminton, squash, aerobics, swimming or fitness training. There are productive links with local sports clubs which share the site.

16. Because Sawston is a village college, pupils have ready access to this sort of community provision. Students benefit from the better range of resources and facilities available thanks to of the community dimension. Because of the effective, co-ordinated approach to the way school and community provision is planned, it has been possible to present pupils with a coherent set of opportunities, to target resources and to encourage participation. This significantly enhances the curriculum and enriches the experience of many pupils. In addition to the wider opportunities it affords in music, drama, sport and other leisure activities, pupils also follow community education courses. For example, one in five of the older pupils is currently taking a mathematics extension course, linked to the GCSE work they are doing in the college. This improves results and has the effect of lifting the sights of all pupils. Others have been able to take additional examination subjects, such as astronomy, photography or drama, which would otherwise have been impossible for them within the constraints of the college's option system. Pupils are also encouraged to access the activities and skills programmes provided by the youth section of the community programme, for example the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, in which around fifty pupils take part each year. Similarly, it has been possible to involve certain pupils from the college in the work of the *Opportunities Without Limits (OWL)* charity (for adults with learning difficulties) which is based on site. This has worked to the mutual benefit of pupils and the charity, and is proving a powerful motivational factor for some disaffected pupils.

The college is very successful in promoting pupils' personal development. This is underpinned by the very good relationships at all levels.

17. The ethos of the college encourages high standards of personal development. Pupils have positive attitudes to the college and to their work. Their attendance is very high, compared with national figures. Most pupils show high levels of commitment to their learning and respond very well to the high expectations the college has of them. They are also taught to see themselves as members of a community where care and consideration for others are important values. As well as benefiting from the rich provision available to them, they are prepared to contribute to it.

18. Older pupils show maturity in their concern and support for younger pupils. A good example is in the regular paired reading sessions, where Year 11 pupils work with substantial numbers of younger pupils on their reading. The older pupils manage the task in a very supportive way. They note any difficulties the Year 7 pupils might have, the progress made, their level of understanding and fluency, and discuss in an open but sensitive way what has been achieved and what they might work on together to improve things. They are keen to help and ready to act as friend and counsellor to these younger pupils, discussing any problems and helping them settle into life in the college. These partnerships are very productive, not only in terms of the resulting improvement in standards of reading, but also in the impact on the personal development of older and younger pupils alike.

19. This readiness of pupils to help and encourage one another is a feature of life at Sawston. In music practices and rehearsals, for example, it is noticeable how often more proficient musicians see it as their responsibility to guide and help those less experienced than themselves. Many pupils volunteer to help on open evenings and at other events. As was seen during the inspection, they behave with confidence, courtesy and initiative, and act as good ambassadors for the college. Year 11 pupils run a dance club for younger pupils. Year 9 pupils have worked with children from local primary schools in science and technology sessions arranged for them. In physical education lessons and sports practices, teachers make a point of emphasising the importance of teamwork and relationships, ensuring that no one is frozen out. Pupils are taught to co-operate and are given good opportunities to put this into practice in pair work and group work in many subjects. They do so very well, and show that they can be trusted to work together productively and to accept responsibility for organising themselves, without the need for intrusive supervision. In lessons across the curriculum, pupils are quick to help each other, respectful of the ideas and opinions of others, and tolerant of their mistakes. The year group and school councils provide another avenue for pupils to learn to act on behalf of others and to accept corporate responsibility. Members take seriously the challenge of deciding how to spend their allocation of £1000 per term on items of benefit to the pupils – recognising that first claim on the money will be the cost of any thoughtless actions, such as damage to property or the cost of litter collection.

20. The college puts a premium on the value of the individual and the importance of developing mutual trust and respect. This is borne out in the way adults behave towards pupils and is reflected in the way pupils are learning to behave towards those around them. The personal example of teachers, the values they uphold and the very good relationships in the college underpin pupils' personal development. The excellent opportunities for learning and for cultural development beyond the classroom are another key factor in expanding their horizons and helping them develop as rounded individuals.

21. Equally important is the contribution teachers in the college make when they tackle spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues as part of their teaching. The religious education lessons inspected made an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Work in

subjects such as English, drama, humanities and personal, social and health education (PSHE) has brought pupils face to face with important moral and social issues. Many teachers are good at helping pupils to develop and express moral values and to improve their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individuals in society. Pupils enjoy the challenge of exploring such issues. They also show considerable maturity, as was seen in a PSHE lesson on a potentially sensitive sex education topic. Work in art has encouraged pupils to follow up themes of personal importance that have captured their imagination in other subjects. Last year, one pupil's art project was based on an exploration of the changing role of women over the last century; another was inspired by ideas associated with Buddhism and with the notion of eternal life. Running through a good deal of pupils' written and creative work is a compassion and an empathy for the feelings and situations of others. This compassion finds a practical expression in the many fund-raising activities which they organise and support.

The very good leadership of the Principal and Governing Body, with its focus on raising achievement, evaluating performance and planning for improvement, gives the college an agenda for continuous improvement.

22. An important reason for the college's success and the good progress it has made since the last inspection lies in the drive and clear sense of purpose provided by the Principal and Governing Body. Their strong and supportive leadership has at its heart a clearly expressed commitment to achieving high standards and effective personal development for all pupils. It is clearly stated by the college that the central purpose of management at all levels is to ensure high standards of achievement. All key staff understand and share this goal. The management weaknesses noted in the last inspection in the areas of monitoring and evaluation and development planning have been turned into strengths.

23. A climate of critical scrutiny has been established in a relentless search for ways of improving what is provided, and for meeting challenges and opportunities head on. There is a climate of openness in which weaknesses and areas in need of improvement are acknowledged and confronted, and never avoided or excused. There is a willingness to recognise failures as well as successes, and to use them as a springboard to improvement. There is a well thought-through approach to monitoring and evaluating performance. This includes the detailed analysis of performance data, which is used as a basis for improvement planning, and also by the Governing Body in its review of its mission statement, core values and strategic priorities. It also includes a programme for monitoring teaching and learning in the classroom. A subject monitoring policy outlines clearly what is expected of subject managers in terms of systematic observation of lessons, monitoring the attainment and progress of individual pupils and classes, and the scrutiny of pupils' work. This central quality assurance role is made explicit in the job descriptions of heads of faculty. Several subject teams add to this a programme of mutual lesson observations to give every teacher the chance to see others at work, to add an extra dimension to professional discussions about how teaching and learning can best be developed. The college's established approach to continuous professional development has left it very well placed to take on the new requirements for performance management.

24. Governors receive a wealth of information about the college's performance. They use this well to account for the college's performance and improvement. They use their links with sector managers to challenge senior and middle managers about areas in need of improvement or change, as well as to offer support and encouragement. Together with senior managers, they make good use of comparative performance data to check, for example, whether courses on offer or services used give best value. This has helped the college to make efficient use of scarce resources at a time of acute financial stringency. The college uses a parental questionnaire professionally devised by a market research company.

The results are analysed by age, gender and level of attainment to assess levels of satisfaction with a range of aspects of the college's work. The results are taken very seriously and are fed into the development planning process.

25. Development planning has improved greatly since the last inspection and is now very good. It is rooted in the college's mission statement and values, and is founded on a detailed published, statistical analysis of available data and a shrewd, uncompromising analysis of the present position. The involvement of governors, staff and (through the questionnaire) parents is assured. Appropriate core priorities are identified, with a clear focus on raising achievement and improving provision. From these flow specific objectives and detailed action plans. Regular monitoring of progress against targets is a motivating force for improvement. It is mirrored in the college's systematic approach to tracking the attainment and progress of individual pupils in all subjects, using baseline measures and value-added information, to set targets for their individual performance and to take supportive action where underachievement is identified. This target setting for individual pupils is well established for older pupils and is being extended to include all pupils, in the commitment to raising standards.

26. All of this makes for a climate in which identifying what needs to change and the drive for continual improvement are seen as the business of everyone. It is a key factor that has enabled the college to remain a vibrant institution in which pupils achieve well, in the face of a period of financial strictures and staffing reductions.

The college caters very well for pupils with special educational needs or who are facing other difficulties. As a result, they make very good progress.

27. There has been considerable progress since the last inspection in the way the college caters for pupils with special educational needs. The college has invested significant resources and energy into improving this area of its work, which is now a strength, and one which is valued by many parents. The leadership and management of special educational needs provision is very good. The co-ordinator's vision, drive and sense of purpose, with very strong support from the Principal and senior managers, are major factors in assuring the success of the work. There is now an effective process for identifying pupils' special needs, helped by close co-ordination with the primary schools from which pupils come and by extensive screening on entry. The process for planning, monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress against the targets set in their individual education plans and statements of special educational needs is very good indeed. Parents are fully involved in reviews. There is a very good range of support, tailored to the needs of individuals. This includes the use of specialist resources to meet specific needs. It also includes some withdrawal, mainly for younger pupils to work on basic skills, but the main thrust is through the targeted deployment of a sizeable team of learning support assistants in mainstream lessons. This work is very well managed and monitored, and is successful in helping pupils to learn and achieve well. The Student Centre, where the special needs team is based, is seen as a centre for learning, and is open to all, especially at lunchtime. Pupils know where to turn when they need additional support on a more informal basis, and they are not disappointed – for example when there is a need for counselling or extra help in improving organisational skills. The special needs team provides a high level of support and encouragement for pupils not only in lesson time, but throughout the day. Thanks to the very good provision and the way it forms an integral part of the work of the whole staff, pupils with special needs make very good progress in their work. This is perhaps most noticeable in the significant gains pupils make in basic literacy, helped by the very effective paired reading scheme. The Summer Literacy School organised by the college for the past three years has also given a boost to pupils coming to the college.

28. One reason for the success of this aspect of the college's work is its

uncompromising focus on equipping all pupils to take advantage of learning opportunities, whether in the college, through its wider community provision, or through its strong links with other agencies. There is a strong emphasis on educational and social inclusion. For example, the college has worked hard to engage disaffected youngsters, including those who may have been in danger of exclusion, for whom the traditional curriculum was not working well enough. The college has widened the range of courses for older pupils, has made use of the Youth Award Scheme and, this year, is piloting an "Alternative Curriculum Experience" for a small group of pupils in Year 10. This innovative project, which has involved close consultation with pupils and parents, incorporates weekly work experience placements, business simulation projects and residential visits, as well as maintaining an emphasis on improving basic skills. Behaviour and progress are monitored on a weekly basis, with regular feedback to pupils and parents. Although the pilot is at an early stage of development, there are encouraging signs of improved attitudes to work and a significant reduction in exclusion for the pupils concerned. The cost-effectiveness of the project is being monitored.

29. The college works hard to find ways of supporting its more vulnerable pupils who might otherwise be at risk of educational or social exclusion. There are after-school homework support sessions on several nights each week. The college has applied for funding to build on this by targeting after-school provision more directly at its more vulnerable pupils. It has already begun to run after-school courses on "bed-sit cooking", "build your own computer" and "go-kart building". Its Friday Night Club caters for over 30 pupils from local special schools as well as an equal number from the college. Some of the college's most vulnerable pupils have been encouraged to act as support workers on the project run by the OWL charity, constructing sports cars at its base on the college site. These and other similar initiatives are helping to motivate pupils and to foster positive attitudes to life-long learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Results in science at GCSE are not as good as in other subjects and not as good as they should be.

30. At age 16, pupils do less well in science than they do in the other subjects they take. In recent years, GCSE results in science, although above the national average, have not been as good as in other subjects. This summer, they fell to around the national average, a drop which helps to account for the overall dip in the college's results this year. Whilst the faculty has been affected by staffing changes and increased class sizes, the college has done a good deal to support teachers as they have worked hard to raise standards. In the national tests for pupils at age 14, results have been well above the national average in recent years, and improved further this summer. At GCSE, attempts to raise standards have not yet borne fruit.

31. Work seen during the inspection shows that some pupils do achieve high standards, and that some teaching of science is lively, energetic and of very good quality. However, teaching is not as consistently good, and pupils do not show the same high degree of concentration and commitment, as in other subjects. There are a number of reasons for this. In one lesson during the inspection, failure to control the class meant that teaching and learning were poor. While other teaching seen was satisfactory, it still had features that could be improved. In some cases, teachers were not inspiring pupils, particularly the more reluctant learners, or managing the class in a way that conveyed a zest for learning and kept all pupils working to capacity. In other cases, not enough was done to take account of the different levels of attainment within the class and to make sure that all were suitably supported and challenged. In some groups, classroom routines and procedures were not tight enough and, as a result, momentum was lost.

Pupils miss out because the college does not teach religious education to all pupils in years 10 and 11, as the law requires, and because pupils do not have a daily act of collective worship.

32. The college teaches religious education in Years 10 and 11 only to those pupils who take the subject as a GCSE option. These pupils achieve high standards and very good results at GCSE. Other pupils in these year groups do not study religious education. The Governing Body acknowledges that this fails to meet the statutory requirements, but believe that the needs of pupils are adequately met elsewhere in the curriculum. Inspectors found that the requirement to teach the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education is not met through what is taught in other subjects. The college is not therefore providing the religious education to which pupils are entitled and that the law requires for pupils of this age. Pupils have a very good grounding in the subject through their religious education lessons in their first three years in the college, which make an impressive contribution to their personal and spiritual development. The teaching of religious education seen during the inspection was of a very high order indeed. Under current arrangements, pupils miss chances to consider further their own values and beliefs, as well as those of others, through this subject in their final two years at the college.

33. Another gap is that pupils do not have a daily act of collective worship. All pupils have an assembly on two days each week. These are well organised and are helpful to pupils in their personal development. Some assemblies are of high quality and contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual development, also incorporating an act of collective worship. However, the college does not provide an act of worship for all pupils on a daily basis, as they are required to do by law.

Although pupils have many opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT), and although there are clear plans for further development, the teaching and assessment of this subject are not yet as well co-ordinated as they should be.

34. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught for one period per fortnight to pupils in Year 7. A substantial number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 take an examination course in ICT. In the main, ICT is taught, not as a separate subject, but through the work pupils do in other subjects across the curriculum.

35. Pupils are given many very good opportunities to apply and develop their ICT capability through the use of ICT tools to help them in their learning in the different subjects. Extensive use is made of ICT in the college and pupils have access to a good range of ICT equipment, which is increasingly well maintained and managed. Pupils use this equipment to good effect. Subjects take responsibility for teaching particular aspects of the ICT curriculum and build them into their schemes of work, so that, in theory, all parts of the syllabus are adequately covered and pupils' attainment and progress in ICT are assessed. The framework that has been devised is good on paper. In practice, it has been working very well in some subjects, but less so in others, particularly where teachers have not yet had specific ICT training related to their subject. Arrangements for co-ordinating the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements in ICT are not yet fully in place, and it is difficult for teachers to know what individual pupils have done overall, and to what level. In the past, some pupils have not been taught enough ICT in Year 10, leaving them with a large amount to catch up. From this year, the college is planning to teach and assess ICT through "key skills" units, again through other subjects, a programme which, when fully implemented, should meet the need to teach all aspects of ICT in Years 10 and 11.

36. The college has well thought-out plans to improve the teaching and co-ordination of ICT and these are rightly being pursued as part of the current development plan. The college is clear about what needs to be done and how.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. The college should now:

- (1) improve teaching in science so that standards are raised, particularly at GCSE;
- (2) ensure that it meets the requirement to teach religious education to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the requirement for a daily act of collective worship;
- (3) improve the co-ordination of the teaching and assessment of information and communication technology, in line with the college's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	31	31	24	0	2	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1087
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	63

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	36
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	248

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	4.4	School data	0.2
National comparative data	7.9	National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	120	100	220

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	67	91	89
	Girls	79	82	74
	Total	146	173	163
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	66 (81)	78 (70)	74 (68)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	35 (50)	52 (53)	38 (34)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	105	73
	Girls	86	90	68
	Total	166	195	141
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	75 (78)	88 (84)	64 (81)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	51 (54)	63 (58)	35 (51)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	123	128	251

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	66	116	119
	Girls	95	126	128
	Total	161	242	247
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	64.1 (62.6)	96.4 (92.2)	98
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.8 (45.1)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and The percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	20 85.0
	National	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	4
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	5
White	1064
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	2	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	35	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	54.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	768

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.0
Key Stage 4	24.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2438125
Total expenditure	2474648
Expenditure per pupil	2296
Balance brought forward from previous year	23965
Balance carried forward to next year	(12558)

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1087
Number of questionnaires returned	164

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	57	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	5	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	52	22	4	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	59	14	5	2
The teaching is good.	19	73	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	50	15	4	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	40	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	38	6	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	20	53	16	1	10
The school is well led and managed.	32	49	5	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	55	7	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	45	6	1	7

Percentages of responses are rounded to the nearest integer, sum may not = 100

Other issues raised by parents at the parents' evening and in written responses

- The great majority of parents believe that the college serves their children well and achieves high standards across the college.
- Parents expressed concern about the financial squeeze over recent years, which had resulted in staffing reductions and increased class sizes. They commend the college for maintaining the quality of provision and high standards in face of these constraints.