



Leasowes Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103861
LEA Dudley
Inspection number 277014
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Michelle Parker HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Kent Road
School category	Community		Halesowen
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		West Midlands B62 8PJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 816285
Number on roll	1202	Fax number	01384 816286
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr John Howells

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 7 June 2006 - 8 June 2006	Inspection number 277014
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Leasowes Community College is a community site and a Specialist Business and Enterprise College. The college serves an urban area and takes students from a number of surrounding boroughs, particularly Birmingham and Sandwell. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is just below average. Around one fifth of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and about half of these speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is broadly average, but a significant proportion of students have low reading ages.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving college with many good features. It has effectively tackled the reasons for its poor performance in the recent past and is on track to achieve much better results. Achievement and standards are now satisfactory. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Specialist college status has been used effectively to drive up standards in business studies (BE) from 39% of pupils achieving at least a grade C in 2004 to 58% in 2005. A 'fast track' system has meant that, in the current Year 11, 60% of the students have already attained this level. The success of allowing students to enter examinations a year early has encouraged the college to extend this policy to art, physical education (PE), information and communication technology (ICT) and music. The college's specialism has also enabled it to work successfully with local primary schools through the Young Enterprise scheme. Year 7 students confirmed to the inspectors that they had felt more confident and positive about moving to the college because they had already got to know some of the teachers. The strong student council and the effective involvement of all students in the college's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education have helped students to become more reflective and aware of the needs of others. Opportunities for the students to take assemblies, design the college's intranet pages for physical, social and health education, and to be involved in the design of the new college buildings play an important part in the students' education. Students are very positive about coming to the college because teachers make every effort to make learning interesting and help them to develop positive relationships with others. Thus, students said occasions of bullying were rare, and occurred mostly among the younger pupils who had not been at the school for long. They were confident that any incidents were promptly dealt with by staff. Students particularly enjoy learning through the 'flexible Fridays,' which have brought in a wide range of visitors and experiences. They also appreciate the wide choice of extra-curricular activities, which include teaching in the local primary schools. Most students feel they are listened to but some parents, carers and students do not feel sufficiently involved in decisions. The principal has given a very strong lead in developing new teaching initiatives upon which the college can build and, as a result, staff are keen to try new ideas. This has led to a steady improvement in teaching, effectively underpinned by a better system for tracking the students' progress. However, the monitoring of teaching by middle managers is insufficiently evaluative and does not ensure that good practice is effectively shared. Effective support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities has meant that they make good progress in literacy and numeracy. However, at times, higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged to ensure that they make the progress they could. The college works hard to improve its tired and well used buildings, but students and parents have commented upon its shabby state.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of lesson evaluation to ensure all staff have a consistent view of effective teaching.
- Ensure all subjects provide challenge for the most able students to help them reach the highest levels.
- Ensure that parents and students have

opportunities to express their views and that these are considered as part of the college's selfevaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly average. In 2005, students made slow progress in mathematics. This was also the case, but to a lesser extent, in English because some English teachers were absent. In mathematics, staff were inappropriately qualified and lacked the knowledge and skills to teach students effectively. Appropriate strategies for improvement and newly appointed qualified staff have helped improve the quality of teaching so that students' progress is now satisfactory.

Standards in GCSE examinations in 2005 were broadly average and an improvement on those of the previous year. Higher-attaining students make slower progress than they might, mainly because they lack appropriate challenge in lessons. Specialist College status is having a positive effect and helping to improve standards. Coursework grades indicate a significant rise in overall GCSE results in 2006.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in literacy and numeracy because of good quality support from teachers. The college and local authority support team provide effective support for students from minority ethnic communities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students are reflective and generally treat each other with consideration. They enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities available, including trips abroad and residential weekends. They are active in college life through the large college council and feel that their views are taken into account. The majority behave responsibly in and out of class and are considerate towards other students. However, a small minority of students are disruptive in some lessons where staff are less experienced, and this disturbs the learning of others. Attendance is satisfactory. Many opportunities are provided for students to work together and study independently, particularly when the normal timetable is suspended for 'flexible Friday.' They are actively encouraged to follow healthy lifestyles and 50% of students participate in extra PE. They understand the importance of healthy eating and staying healthy. Students make a good contribution to the community. They take part in performances, visit primary schools to teach PE and businesses studies and have the opportunity to gain community-based awards. Students enjoy and feel safe at college. Vocational courses and the college's links with businesses, together with a successful Young Enterprise scheme, contribute well to students' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, with much that is good. Well planned professional development ensures that most lessons include a suitable variety of activities and end with a clear review of what was learned. Students are expected to assess their own progress and are guided helpfully towards this. Teachers give the students responsibility for decisions and learning. Consequently, students are independent and self reliant. Lower attaining students are well supported, either through additional help or through work that is adapted to their needs. However, higher attaining pupils are often not sufficiently challenged. They cover the work quickly and then wait for the rest to catch up. Generally, marking is thorough but some books are sketchily marked, although most students have a realistic idea about how well they are doing. Homework is not set regularly and this is a concern for some parents. Assessment of work through tests and examinations is reliable. The data has been used to identify underachieving middle-ability students in Year 11 and enabled teachers to give them extra guidance and raise their standards. Higher attainers are not supported to the same extent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and innovative. It is well established, appropriate and developed to meet new initiatives. Students have access to a good choice of subjects. The weekly five hour block of intensive teaching in each subject, in rotation, enables departments to make good use of outside teaching resources such as local woodlands or art galleries. It allows concentrated work on projects or, for example, longer investigations in science or preparation of slow cooking foods in food technology. In addition, the timetable gives fast track Year 10 students up to a week of intensive study. This successfully motivates students and has led to early entry to GCSE and a dramatic improvement in results. The resulting free time in Year 11 allows students to begin advanced level courses. The associated strong links with further education colleges ensure that the majority of students continue their education post-16.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Achievement managers have been introduced to link monitoring and mentoring. As a result, effective tracking and support are in place for Year 11. However, this good practice has not been fully implemented in all years. Pupils leaving the primary schools are effectively supported into the college. Vulnerable students, including those who are looked after, receive good support, which enables them to make good progress. To improve behaviour and reduce exclusions, pastoral officers and the Access Centre have been successfully introduced in response to comments from parents and staff. The Learning Development

Centre provides effective support to students with learning difficulties and disabilities, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Relationships with most parents are good, but a significant minority feel, with some justification, that the college does not listen to their views or take them into account. The college has good arrangements for safeguarding students, including risk assessments and child protection procedures. The college provides a safe physical environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The principal provides strong leadership and his vision for the college has been successfully shared with the newly formed senior leadership team. Previous developments have been fully evaluated and this has prompted a culture of innovation. The senior team are passionate about improving and developing teaching. Their accurate identification of the barriers to improving students' performance has led to them revamping the middle management structure. Middle managers are now using data to monitor students and track progress. However, they are not ensuring that higher-attaining students are sufficiently challenged and can attain the higher levels. Middle managers' evaluations of the quality of lessons are insufficiently rigorous and have not identified that much of the teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Governance is good. They know the college well, are highly supportive and give a great deal of their time. They hold the college appropriately to account through their wide range of committees. The college's self-evaluation is satisfactory, the senior team know the college well and thus it has a good capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Students Thank you for the very polite and friendly welcome you gave to the team when we came to inspect your college. You looked very smart in your college uniform. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. It was very interesting to watch you work and talk to your teachers about your progress. We noticed how mature you were in your discussions with us. We were also very impressed with the work of the student council and your useful work in local primary schools and the community. We think you go to a satisfactory college, which is improving and has many good features. All the staff work hard to support you and help you to learn well. We have seen an improvement in the quality of your coursework and were pleased to hear you talk about what you had to do to improve your work. Some of you explained that, in some lessons, poor behaviour affected your chances to learn. We were pleased to know that the strategies the college was using had begun to improve this situation. The specialist college status has helped the college develop a wider range of teaching strategies and allowed you to have greater flexibility in your learning. 'Flexible Fridays' and 'fast track' have provided you with further opportunities to develop your interests. The provision the college makes for your personal development and well-being is good. The college is led extremely well by your principal. He is helped a lot with this by all senior staff. All the teachers are trying hard to make the college an even better place for you to come to and learn. Your teachers care for you and work hard. Most of you try hard in lessons, behave well and take care over your work. However, while we believe that all of you make at least satisfactory progress, you need more opportunities to do challenging work that will allow you to reach the highest levels. We have asked the college to provide more opportunities for you and your parents and carers to express your views as part of the college's self-evaluation. We have also asked the college to improve its evaluation of lessons so that all teachers have a similar view of good teaching. We hope you are successful in whatever you want to do and wish you well for the future. Yours faithfully, Michelle Parker, Her Majesty's Inspector