



# St Neots Community College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110878  
**LEA** CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 278544  
**Inspection dates** 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Alan Alder LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Barford Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		PE19 2SH
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01480374748
<b>Number on roll</b>	1137	<b>Fax number</b>	01480375150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs. Pat Nicholls
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Mark Duke

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

St Neots Community College is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 19. It is a larger than average school with 1137 students, of whom 165 are in the sixth form. The school is situated in a town in the south west of Cambridgeshire. Some 90% of students are from White British backgrounds and fewer than 4% speak English as an additional language. About 15% of students have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is close to average. Almost 11% of students are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national figure. The sixth form has grown significantly in recent years. The school is currently led by an acting principal. The school works actively with Samuel Pepys Special School with their Post 16 provision on the St Neots Community College campus. The school has been awarded specialist school status for performing arts and communication technologies.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The college evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory. The evidence from this inspection supports that view. The progress which students make is satisfactory and the way in which the college uses its finances to enable this shows that that value for money is satisfactory. Efforts to ensure that the college is fully staffed for the first time in three years have been effective. Newly qualified teachers are being well supported. The progress made since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. These improvements together with the recent increase in the progress made by students and a general tightening up of the way the college operates demonstrate that the capacity to improve is satisfactory. Behaviour is improving though the college recognises that more remains to be done. Students' behaviour varies too much between one lesson and another. This reflects the variations in teaching quality. Across the college there is too much variability in quality. The good practice shown by some teachers and subject leaders is not systematically shared with others. Efforts are now being made to bring about greater consistency in practice. Students' and parents' views of the college are not used sufficiently to evaluate what the college does and to decide upon areas for development and to monitor the college's progress. Achieving specialist status has helped the college to expand its curriculum and its extra curricular activities in the performing arts.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The college evaluates the sixth form as being good. Inspectors judge it to be satisfactory with some good features. Students study a good number of subjects. The progress they make is satisfactory though it varies too much from subject to subject. In some Year 13 classes there are a small number of students, limiting their exposure to a range of views in discussion. The curriculum opportunities are good with a range of courses that are well matched to students' interests. This includes a range of vocational courses which are popular. Students are well supported, for example, in their applications to higher education.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve behaviour by applying behaviour management strategies with greater consistency and by improving the quality of teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that good practice is widely shared and that the improvement of inadequate teaching is a high priority.
- Develop the use of consultation with parents and students to make it more effective in helping the school decide on areas for improvement and development.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are below national averages but the progress made by students is satisfactory from Year 7 to 11. When students join the college in Year 7 their standards are below those nationally. The national tests at the end of Year 9 show that, overall, all groups of students make good progress including those with learning difficulties. Students perform best in English and the standard achieved is higher than nationally. The college met its challenging target for English. This shows what is possible. Progress is satisfactory in mathematics and science, where standards are similar to national averages though targets were not achieved. The 2005 GCSE results show that progress in Years 10 and 11 is less than that made in Years 7 to 9. Standards are below the national average. Girls make good progress. Boys' progress is below average but those who performed best in their Key Stage 3 tests make most progress in their GCSE subjects. Students with learning difficulties continue to make good progress. In the sixth form, standards and progress are both satisfactory, but there are considerable differences in how well students perform in different subjects. In general, students perform best in vocational subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Personal development is satisfactory overall, although the college views it as good. Some features are good, including students' social awareness and the personal development of sixth formers. Students' spiritual and cultural development is achieved satisfactorily through their work in subjects such as English, humanities, art and music, but there is no daily collective act of worship. A good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is developed through science and physical education, healthy eating options in the college's canteen as well as out of college sporting opportunities. Overall moral development is satisfactory. Students say they enjoy college though overall attendance is broadly average. A considerable number of students arrive late. Most students know satisfactorily how to keep themselves safe. Students say behaviour is improving but it is unsatisfactory because although most students are prepared to concentrate and work hard too many do not behave well and disturb the learning of others. At break and lunchtimes behaviour is mostly good but on occasions it becomes rough and worries younger students. They know who to go to if they are involved in any incidents of bullying, which they say do occur. However, some are reluctant to approach staff because they feel the problems are not always tackled. Students contribute satisfactorily to the community both within college, some as prefects, and locally particularly through their citizenship course in Year 11. Their Year 10 work experience and the skills they develop at college prepare them satisfactorily for their future work and economic well-being. Sixth formers develop good study skills. Most willingly take responsibility and contribute well to the college community for example through supporting younger students in their learning, and having responsibilities as prefects.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, though some lessons seen were inadequate. Most teachers develop good relationships with students, plan lessons adequately and often well. Most students enjoy learning but some unsatisfactory attitudes to work, such as in mathematics, are revealed through poorly presented work. These attitudes are a result of there being too little challenge. This reduces the progress that students make in lessons and sometimes leads to misbehaviour. In more challenging lessons, such as in English, students work hard, enjoy their work and make good progress. In many lessons questions are not used to assess understanding to find out if more teaching of a particular point is needed. Most teachers know students' capabilities, mark work regularly, and encourage students to assess themselves, but students are not aware of their level of achievement in their subjects. In most subjects students are given good opportunity to present and explore new ideas using computers. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively in mathematics. Generally, students with additional learning needs are well supported by teaching assistants, but planning for these students and the gifted and talented is not consistently good in lessons other than English. Teaching in the sixth form are satisfactory. In some subjects, however, pass rates are lower than they should be because teachers do not plan tasks that take into account the range of ability in the class.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum for 11-16 year olds is satisfactory, offering a reasonable range of academic and vocational courses as well as some work placements supplemented by college courses. The college's performing arts status has been used to good effect to establish courses in media and drama and to extend music provision. The plan to use the specialist status to enrich teaching of other subjects has yet to be fully implemented. The curriculum extends into the community through citizenship projects. The novel development, as a result of the college's communications technology status, of having a certificated computer course into Year 9 has extended student opportunities. Careers guidance is good, most students from Year 10 have a clear idea of the types of work they would like to do. The curriculum is enhanced through a satisfactory range of clubs including hobbies, sports, music, dramatic productions and charity events. Many students participate in performing arts activities, especially the drama productions each year, bands and choirs. The sixth form curriculum is good and has a wide range of vocational and more traditional courses.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory in the main college and good in the sixth form. Procedures for child protection are in place, and satisfactory safeguards are taken to ensure that students are not at risk, for example through the risk assessments made in the science department. Academic monitoring days allowing form tutors to meet parents, discuss students' progress and set targets for improvement have attracted very good attendance. Most teachers make students well aware of their targets for improvement, and how they can be achieved. The process is not effective enough however because many students do not record their targets and review their progress. Careers education is of good quality. A higher than national proportion of Year 10 students has a good idea of what sort of career they would like. Effective behaviour support for some students is provided and training for teachers and assistants in behaviour management is beginning to have an effect. Sixth formers benefit from the college's good links with further education providers and universities, and they also get good careers advice.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has recently begun to take stringent measures to check its own effectiveness. Some strides have been made in starting to review the provision of departments and priorities have been identified for improvement. However, there are aspects that have not been checked and addressed adequately, for example the poor quality of much of the work in mathematics. The systems to follow up the impact of the reviews are not thorough enough. Senior staff have brought in suitable methods to improve behaviour and reduce the rate of exclusion. Nevertheless, this is very recent and the impact has been inconsistent, so too much unsatisfactory behaviour remains. Department leadership varies in quality. It is good in some, for example in English, but is less effective in others, and consequently the rates of progress are inconsistent between subjects. Specialist status has been used to good effect in expanding the extra curricular opportunities in the performing arts. The college's self-evaluation is realistic about most aspects of its work. It is not always, however, sufficiently critical and consequently is over-generous in some areas, particularly the personal development and care of the students. The planning for college improvement is satisfactory, showing suitable priorities and measures to bring about developments but the way in which success is measured and the arrangements for monitoring are not sharp enough. There is insufficient communication with students and their parents. As a result, a significant number of both expressed concerns about features of the college, particularly feeling that management does not consult well enough, or take their views into account sufficiently. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are hard-working, have a sound

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understanding of the college and carry out regular visits to familiarise themselves with its work





## Inspection judgements

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

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	4	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Thank you for being so helpful during our inspection. We met and spoke to quite a number of you both in meetings as well as in lessons. It is clear that many of you enjoy college, and you also have some ideas for how you would like to see the college develop. I'd like to let you know what we thought. We found that the college was improving in some important ways. For example, it has worked hard to get all the teachers it needs. We also found that college is getting better at finding out what it does well, and not so well, so that it knows what to improve. We found that most teaching is satisfactory or better and that you make satisfactory progress overall. The college works hard to help you do well in the Year 9 tests and in other examinations including those in the sixth form. There are some improvements we think the college needs to make. Although behaviour is improving, more improvement is needed still. You can all help to bring this about. There is some teaching which is not satisfactory, and that needs to get better. Many of your parents and yourselves have important things to say about how the college needs to improve. The college is aware that it needs to do more to find out those views and act upon those which are most helpful. Best wishes for your future.