



The City of Leicester College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120297
LEA Leicester City
Inspection number 280787
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector David Driscoll RISP

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Downing Drive
School category	Community		Evington
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 6LN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2413984
Number on roll	1451	Fax number	0116 241 6728
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Chris Vaughan-Jones
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr Nigel Boyd (acting)

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	Inspection number 280787
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The City of Leicester College is much larger than most other schools and specialises in business and enterprise. The school is very popular with parents; they want to send more children to the school than there are places available. It serves a stable, but relatively deprived, community. The great majority of pupils are from a minority ethnic background; most are of Indian heritage. Although most pupils' first language is not English, only a relatively small proportion is learning English for the first time. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has excellent systems for measuring its performance and success, so it is not surprising that the inspection findings agree with the school's view. It provides a good education.

The school goes to good lengths to ensure that pupils live and work in harmony, and that all can make good progress regardless of their gender, background or ability. Standards are improving year on year and are now average. The school carefully analyses where improvements can be made and has identified attendance, punctuality and behaviour as the most important aspects that hold pupils back. Great strides have been made in all three areas, although more still needs to be done on attendance in Year 11 and the sixth form. The school has ensured it has the support of parents in doing this, by informing them immediately of any problems. Although teaching is good, the school knows that it can be better, and it is already working on the quality of guidance that pupils and students receive by way of marking.

The school's managers have driven standards up since the previous inspection, and are continuing to do so. Results at GCSE and A level are improving faster than the national average. Managers have been hampered a little this year by an unexpected budget deficit, of some considerable size, caused by previously inefficient financial control. Nevertheless, the school is still providing satisfactory value for the money it receives.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school correctly judges its sixth form to be good. Standards are average by the end of Year 13 and have improved significantly in recent years. Students make good progress, as their GCSE results are below the national average for students starting A level courses. Good teaching enables students to make good progress. Students enjoy their time at school and particularly appreciate the help they get from teachers. They are successfully encouraged to work independently. Teachers have very good relationships with their students; they know their subjects well and make lessons interesting, challenging and fun. Nevertheless, there are times when teachers dominate the lessons and do not allow students to participate as much as they could. In most respects, students show a mature approach to their work. However, their attendance is worse than many of the younger pupils, which holds back their progress. The guidance given to students is good. Students are well prepared for their life after school. They receive very good guidance on how to improve their work both through marking and the regular reviews of their progress. The school provides an extremely good range of courses at different levels and this is a significant factor in encouraging a wide range of students from the local area, many of whom have not been to the school previously, to continue with their education. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. In particular, analysis of achievement is very good indeed and there is very effective monitoring of the quality of teaching, which includes student surveys,

observation of lessons and checking students' work. The leadership has a very clear idea where improvements can be made and this has contributed to the rise in results.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue efforts to improve attendance, particularly in Year 11 and the sixth form.
- Improve the quality of marking and assessment throughout the school to that seen in the best examples.
- Pay greater attention to financial control, so the errors made this year do not recur.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' standards are below average when they join Year 7. Throughout the school they make good progress, so they leave with average standards and GCSE results.

The school carries out an excellent analysis of pupils' progress. This shows that pupils' gender, ethnic background or level of ability make no difference to the progress that they make in the school; neither do any learning difficulties or language problems that pupils may have. The biggest impact on progress is caused by pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour. The school has tackled these issues with great success and continues to hold them as priorities for improvement.

Students also make good progress in the sixth form. They join with below average GCSE results, but leave with average standards and examination results. As in the main school, the biggest cause of any differences in the rate of progress is students' attendance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' and students' personal development is good. They behave well and their attitudes to work are positive. They work together in considerable harmony because they show considerable respect for, and tolerance of, others. A small number occasionally behave immaturely. Changes to the way the school deals with poor behaviour have reduced significantly the number of pupils excluded from school.

Although most pupils and students attend regularly and are punctual, a significant minority have frequent absences. The school works hard to improve attendance and has had noticeable success with Years 7 to 10, so that overall attendance is now average. However, attendance in Year 11 and the sixth form remains unsatisfactory, as these pupils and students have the most entrenched habits of poor attendance.

Pupils and students contribute satisfactorily to their school community and take on responsibilities willingly. As befits its specialist status the school successfully gives good prominence to developing work-place and business skills. Pupils' and students' spiritual awareness is extended well through a good range of cultural and multicultural activities.

The work in tutor time ensures that pupils and students are aware of how to live healthily and safely. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 have satisfactory opportunities to participate in sport. Many join in extra curricular sport. The lunch menus have a reasonable range of healthy options, but the school has not yet found a way to persuade all pupils and students to choose them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching enables pupils and students to make effective progress at each stage of their school career. The school devotes a lot of time to spreading good practice across subjects. As a result, aspects such as detailed lesson planning with a variety of activities are fairly common practice. Many teachers make good use of new technology to motivate their pupils and students.

Teachers manage their classes well, promoting very good relationships that ensure pupils enjoy their lessons. Lesson planning caters for pupils' differing abilities but sometimes not enough time is given for pupils to carry out planned extension activities, or worksheets contain too much for the less able to cope with. Assessment, and the marking of work, is impressive in some subjects, such as English, art and technology, giving clear pointers as to how pupils can improve their work. However, in other subjects, marking can be cursory so pupils do not get the feedback they need.

As an enterprise college, there is an emphasis on pupils using their initiative and taking responsibility for their learning to raise standards. This is a strong feature of work in the sixth form, where private study is being developed through the innovative use of computers. This initiative is being introduced into main school, enhancing opportunities for pupils to develop skills that allow them to work more effectively outside of lessons. However, these skills are also being held back because pupils are not set enough homework.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's curriculum is good because it caters for the needs of all learners and underpins good progress. In the sixth form, it is outstanding with a wide range of academic and vocational courses at several different levels.

Expertise as a specialist college drives the school's curriculum forward, based on analysis of the changing needs of business and the local community. As a result, pupils improve their basic skills and know how to apply them in the adult world. They also learn from the input of local businesses and service organisations.

Pupils benefit from good opportunities for work experience and the chance to learn from adults in local businesses. They also profit from special days with an intensive

focus on enterprise themes, or on religious and cultural issues. There is a wide choice of after school curriculum extension activity, clubs and sports, which add to pupils' and students' enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is justifiably proud of the care and guidance it provides. The form tutors, heads of year and director of the sixth form guide their pupils and students well. They monitor progress carefully, identify problems quickly and use the school's own expertise and that of external agencies well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language receive effective support. The required procedures for health and safety and for child protection are in place. Form tutors and subject teachers keep a close watch on pupils' and students' academic progress. They make sure that pupils and students know how well they are progressing and where they need to improve. Pupils and students receive good advice about future education and careers.

The school has been exceptionally effective at improving pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Initiatives, such as adding time to the end of the day for pupils who are late, have had a dramatic impact on punctuality, for example.

Pupils now spend more time at school and learn more as a result. Although the attendance of sixth form students in lessons is monitored carefully, the school cannot be sure exactly which students are on site at any given time. The condition of some toilets is unsatisfactory. Many are out of order, without locks and most do not have toilet paper, soap or dryers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

One of the school's major strengths is its ability to monitor the quality of teaching and learning accurately and to use data systematically to measure its success. The leadership ensures that all those involved are asked their views, which are taken seriously and acted upon. Improvements are the result of a strong determination to move the school forward by the school's leaders, including the governors.

An excellent feature of the school is the accuracy with which it identifies areas of weakness and the speed with which it takes effective action. It analyses pupils' results extremely carefully and is very accurate in identifying potential reasons for any underachievement. The previous report noted that there was a need to address issues of behaviour and attendance in order to improve results so both of these areas have now been improved significantly, for example, by reducing dramatically the level of exclusions. The leadership team has also identified that certain groups of pupils in lower sets did not perform well enough, and therefore worked with the staff in charge of pupils with learning difficulties to ensure that these pupils make consistently good progress through the school.

The leadership and management of individual departments are good overall. The school accurately identifies areas of strength and successfully extends these to less effective departments. Heads of department are accountable for their performance and are set challenging targets that they generally meet, which indicates that there is a good capacity to improve.

One area of weakness in the school's management is that of financial control. Poor information led the school to run up a large, and unexpected, deficit this year. Although the school is now drawing up plans to balance the budget in the long term, financial control needs to be robust enough to ensure that the situation does not arise again.

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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
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

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

The City of Leicester College Downing Drive Evington Leicester LE5 6LN

01 December 2005

Dear Pupils and Students

As you know, we visited your school recently to check on how well it is doing. Many thanks to all of you who took time to welcome us, and especially to those who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us.

You told us that you enjoy your life at school, mainly because of the good teaching and the friends you make. We agree with you completely. The good teaching means that you learn more than we often see, and leave with improved examination results as a result. The way that you mix and work together so happily is very clear throughout the school. The one thing that really upsets you is the state of the toilets, which we agree are awful.

The headteacher and other staff have a very good idea of what needs to be done to make things even better, and you can play your part in this. The biggest factor that will help everyone get even better results is improved attendance. Most of you are trying to stay away as little as possible, but Year 11 pupils and those in the sixth form are still not coming to school enough.

We have asked the people who run the school to help teachers to give you more guidance to improve your work, by marking it in more detail. We have also asked them to keep a closer eye on the money, as the school is spending more than it receives.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours faithfully

Dave Driscoll Lead inspector