



Arthur Mellows Village College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110875
Local Authority CITY OF PETERBOROUGH
Inspection number 288801
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Judith Matharu HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	College address	Helpston Road
School category	Foundation		Glington, Glington
Age range of pupils	11–18		Peterborough PE6 7JX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01733 252235
Number on roll (college)	1383	Fax number	01733 252206
Number on roll (6th form)	220		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr D G McLaren
		Headteacher	Mr F Mann
Date of previous college inspection	3 February 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	10–11 January 2007	288801

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Introduction

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

Description of the college

Arthur Mellows Village College is a larger than average secondary school for students aged 11-18. It serves a wide area, with 40% of students joining the college from outside of the immediate catchment area. Attainment on entry is broadly above average. There are a low proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The college gained specialist Technology status in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 3

The inspection supports the college's view that its performance overall is satisfactory, with some features being good. Students achieve consistently good standards, which are above national averages at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. However, given students' starting points, in 2005 some groups of learners, particularly higher attainers, did not achieve as highly as might reasonably be expected. The college has successfully targeted this issue and this has resulted in improvements in 2006. Achievement and progress therefore is satisfactory overall, and improving.

The warden and senior team have successfully focused on a range of strategies to raise achievement, particularly for higher ability students. The impact of these interventions is evident in the improved results at Key Stages 3 and 4 in 2006. Accurate information is being gathered about the college's performance, particularly with regard to the quality of teaching and learning, and data regarding the progress of different groups of learners. However this information is not yet being used consistently by all staff to inform teaching and learning or improvement planning, to ensure all groups of students make appropriate progress.

Students' personal development is a strength of the college. Most respond positively to an ethos which encourages them to learn and celebrates their achievements. Parents and carers hold the college in high regard, although a small minority expressed concerns about the level of challenge for more able students.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some good and outstanding teaching observed. However, best practice is not yet routinely shared. Insufficient matching of appropriate tasks to the differing needs of students is not fully engaging interest in some lessons. There are examples of useful feedback to students on how to improve further, but this is variable at present.

The curriculum is good, being well-matched to students' needs. The flexibility introduced at Key Stage 4 and post-16 enables students to access appropriate options and remain engaged in learning. Teaching and learning is significantly enhanced through specialist status in terms of additional learning resources for information and communication technology.

Pastoral care and guidance is a strong feature of this college. Students are well-cared for in a safe and secure environment. Academic guidance is less strong, but developing and there is good potential in the emerging role of year leaders to further strengthen this.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and improving, as the role of middle managers strengthens in terms of department self-evaluation. However the systematic analysis and use of data by middle managers to identify areas of underperformance has been less well developed until recently. There is good capacity for further improvement, as evidenced by the results of 2006.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Standards in 2006 were broadly average at both A2 and AS Levels. This represents an improvement from previous years, although the number of students attaining A grades remains below average. Students' progress is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some good and very good. Curriculum provision is good and meets the need to prepare students for their future study and well-being. Recently introduced target-setting helps students to improve, but they would appreciate more discussion about their progress. Sixth form students' contributions to their own and the college's activities are good, through their sixth form committee and their work as 'buddies' to new students. Their personal development and well-being is good.

What the college should do to improve further

- Refine the use and application of data to ensure a shared interpretation and understanding of the issues and areas for improvement across the college.
- Improve teaching and learning:
 - Share best practice more widely across the college.
 - Raise attainment at the highest levels by matching tasks to the needs and abilities of learners more consistently.
 - Ensure that marking and feedback to students enables them to understand how to improve further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards in the college are mainly above average and achievement is sound throughout. Students join the college in Year 7, with above average levels of attainment. They achieve above average standards in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3, and well above national standards in their GCSE examinations. However, standards are broadly average in the sixth form.

In 2005 there was some underachievement of potentially higher attaining students at both Key Stages 3 and 4 when the college was less successful in enabling students to gain the highest levels and grades. The college has worked steadily over the past year to remedy this issue. Consequently, in 2006, the proportion of students gaining Level 6 or above met the national average in English, and exceeded it in mathematics and science. Similarly, the proportion gaining higher A* and A grades at GCSE showed sound improvement, meeting the national average for higher attaining students. This represents satisfactory progress overall. Similarly, the percentage of Year 13 students gaining higher A and B passes at A-level improved in 2006, and the percentage gaining 2 or more A-levels slightly exceeded the provisional national average.

Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Overall, targets for all students are now sharper than has been the case in the past, and are more challenging of higher attaining students. The college is becoming more efficient in evaluating students' progress, and the strategies implemented are gradually raising achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding features.

Attendance is good because of effective procedures, and exclusions, both permanent and fixed term, are low. The college behaviour code is effective. It ensures good behaviour in classrooms, but is less successful on corridors and other common areas. Students generally enjoy college and display confident, positive attitudes. They appreciate the varied activities available for them, particularly the provision for sport and the arts.

The student voice is developing but has not yet reached all students in the college. The student council is effective because it is well-organised into sub-groups dealing with real issues. The sixth form committee leads well on whole-college charity activities and fund-raising.

Year 12 students support Year 7 students through a successful buddy scheme and, in addition, there is a lunchtime refuge set up by post-16 counsellors.

The Healthy Eating group has been successful in enabling the college to achieve Healthy School status. This group has inspired changed menus; as a result there is increased take-up of the meals service.

The life-skills enrichment programme is a strong contributor to the very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although the use of 'the thought for the day' has variable impact.

Work-related learning and enterprise activities are effective in contributing to students' future economic well-being. Students have many opportunities to enjoy other cultures and experiences through the college's impressive range of visits in this country and abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall; it is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 or the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and relationships are generally good. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is contagious; consequently

they promote students' confidence in their ability to succeed. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise issues, developing a dialogue as they explore concepts with the teacher. As a result students concentrate well and work purposefully. Questioning is frequently challenging, although few teachers use extended questioning techniques to improve students' independent learning. In a number of lessons, teachers do not make enough use of information about students' abilities to plan lessons which take account of different learning styles. Consequently, the level of challenge for more able students is not high enough. Quite often, teachers talk too much, giving too much information without checking systematically that this is being absorbed and understood properly, and therefore some lessons lack sufficient variety. When marking students' work, teachers are not always consistent in the quality of the advice they provide for further improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. At Key Stage 3 it is broad and balanced, providing learners with a rich and varied programme. In Years 10 and 11 curriculum choices are regularly reviewed to ensure that as far as possible they meet the needs and abilities of individual students. With guidance, students are able to choose either broadly academic courses or courses which include vocational subjects according to their interests and abilities.

The programme for personal development includes careers and work-related learning, citizenship and health education and aspects of these are taught through the innovation of 'collapsed timetable days', as well as through extended tutor time. While this arrangement fulfils statutory requirements, the fragmented delivery can affect the impact of the content.

There is an extensive programme of visits to places of interest locally and abroad. Students and their parents make great efforts to overcome transport difficulties so that large numbers are able to take part in various musical, sporting and other activities that enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support throughout the school are good. Effective induction procedures with feeder primary schools ensure students settle quickly. Sixth form 'buddy' support is appreciated by Year 7 students. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding students are very secure. A group of trained staff meet regularly to support identified students. Students say they feel safe and there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Furthermore, a good variety of curriculum enrichment activities reinforce personal health and safety for all students. Careers advice and guidance is good. Students are given appropriate advice about option choices, which

are well matched to individual needs. The college works well with external support agencies and makes good use of their advice. Students, parents and carers value the pastoral support team highly and their work with the most vulnerable students.

The systems for monitoring students' academic progress have improved recently. Year group leaders are well-placed to quickly identify students who are not making expected progress, although the full impact of this has yet to be realised. Effective strategies are in place to support students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the good use of teaching assistants who are well-briefed and well-qualified.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership, management and the school's ability to judge its own performance is satisfactory overall. The Warden and senior leadership team have a clear vision for the college, a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and are focused on the priority of raising achievement, in particular of higher attaining students. There is a strong commitment to the implementation of strategies to improve performance, the impact of which is beginning to be realised. The senior team are aware that in order to further improve progress, there is a need to develop aspects of teaching and learning to a more consistent level across the college, and share best practice more widely. The college is making more effective use of assessment information to monitor progress and identify underperformance. However, the interpretation and communication of this information lacks clarity. Consequently, there has been insufficiently common understanding of the progress that different groups of learners make. This is now improving and is sharpening the college's planning. The quality of middle management is satisfactory. At best, for example in mathematics and humanities, this is sharply focused on targeted improvement strategies which are effectively evaluated. Governance is good. Governors have a clear and well-informed understanding of the college's priorities, hold it to account well and provide a good level of support and challenge. Specialist college status has been used well to enhance provision and enrich learning in the college, and collaborate effectively with local schools and the wider community to provide learning opportunities. Overall the college has good capacity to improve further.

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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>	College 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?	3	3
How well does the college work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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	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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this college require special measures?	No	
Does this college require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12th January 2007

Dear Students,

Arthur Mellows Village College, Helpston Road, Glinton, Peterborough, PE6 7JX

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your college last week. We enjoyed meeting you and talking with many of you about your college. Your college is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education and is improving in a number of ways. The standards you reach at the end of Year 9 and 11 are high, and the progress that the majority of you make from joining the college is satisfactory and improving.

You are well cared-for in college and relationships with your teachers are good. The atmosphere in college is very supportive of you and celebrates your achievements. Many of you enjoy the wide range of activities available and appreciate that your opinions are listened to and acted upon.

In most of your lessons your behaviour is good; occasionally on corridors it slips a little, which could be avoided.

Your college looks for ways to improve; in particular the improved results of 2006 show this. We have asked the staff to:

- Use all of the information they have about your progress to help plan lessons even more effectively.
- Make sure you achieve highly by encouraging you to aspire to the very highest grades of which you are capable.
- Ensure that your work is marked in ways that help you to understand how to improve further.
- Make sure that the best teaching methods in the college is shared with all staff.

You can help by setting your sights high in terms of grades, many of you are capable of achieving these and, with your teachers' support, can achieve even more highly.

We feel sure your college will continue to improve and we wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes,

Judith Matharu, Her Majesty's Inspector