



# Longsands College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110905  
**Local Authority** CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
**Inspection number** 288809  
**Inspection date** 6 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Alan Alder HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>College address</b>	Longsands Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		St Neots, Huntingdon
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19		Cambridgeshire PE19 1LQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 353535
<b>Number on roll (college)</b>	1661	<b>Fax number</b>	01480 375757
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	298		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Ruth Clapham MBE
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Whatmough
<b>Date of previous college inspection</b>	23 September 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–19	6 February 2007	288809

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the college

Longsands College is situated in the market town of St Neots. Students come from a wide geographical area including St Neots itself and the villages to the east, north and west. Most students are of White British backgrounds; the number from minority ethnic groups is small compared to national averages and no group dominates. The proportion eligible for free school meals is also small. About one student in seven has a learning difficulty or disability, slightly below the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is also lower than nationally.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the college

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The school has made good progress since it was last inspected because of effective leadership and management. The school's leaders are thorough in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take the necessary actions to bring about improvement. Parents are very appreciative of the work the school does.

Students make good progress and standards are above average. A high proportion achieves five or more higher grades at GCSE, and the proportion achieving no passes is extremely low. This is the result of good teaching, it is often lively and engaging, and of the curriculum which is well matched to the aspirations and interests of students. In addition, the progress which students make is being monitored well and actions are taken if they fall behind. In Years 7 to 9 progress is satisfactory but in science it is below that which is expected. The school recognises this and actions are being taken to bring about improvement. Throughout the school all groups of students achieve well, including those with learning difficulties, though some boys do not do as well as expected in GCSE mathematics.

Pupils' personal development is good. Students enjoy school exceptionally well. They have the opportunities and confidence to express their views about school and take satisfaction from the changes that their views have brought about. Behaviour is good, especially in lessons. They feel safe, bullying is a low concern and students are confident that, if it occurs, the school will take a strong line.

The curriculum ensures, through the personal education programme, that students are well informed about health matters. Many walk or cycle to school and take part in extended physical education. In theory they appreciate the need to eat healthily but some still hanker after chips! Many take responsibility and contribute to the school and wider community effectively as a result of the 'Longsands Graduate programme'. Education about work and enterprise is a strong feature of the school. The high and increasing proportion who leave school to enter further or higher education, and the very low proportion who leave with no further education, work or training to go to, is a testament to the success of this work.

The guidance and support provided for students is outstanding. Students are well informed about future options and there are very good arrangements to smooth their path from primary school into secondary. These focus well on students' emotional and organisational needs. There are stringent safeguarding checks and the arrangements for child protection are very secure. Data about students' performance is used very effectively to quickly identify students who require intervention and support. This has yet to have a full impact on students' progress. Good quality learning plans with targets are developed for each student when they join the school and again when they reach Year 10. The network of support for students, both formal and informal is very strong. One parent commented that her children have 'flourished... due to the guidance and support of the staff...going the extra mile'.

The school's specialist status has had a strong impact. It has had a good influence on the curriculum through the provision of new and very popular courses, which in turn have helped to motivate some students. Teaching has benefited through the increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching purposes and students increased use of it to aid learning in a wide range of subjects. Enrichment opportunities such as interviewing television reporters and producing podcasts have enhanced personal development. Targets for students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 have been exceeded. Targets for the end of Year 9 have been partly achieved.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Standards in the 6th form are above average. The progress made by students is satisfactory, building on the good progress made in the main school. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good and recognise the need to improve progress. As a result a system has been introduced for tracking students' progress and alerting parents to any concerns the school has. This is very effective in supporting those students who require it. This development, coupled with the individual mentoring sessions which students have with their tutors every two weeks, means that the care, guidance and support provided are outstanding. The teaching is good and students' work is marked well indicating how it could be improved.

Students like the sixth form, the greater responsibility and freedom they have, and the fact that their progress is well monitored. The curriculum is being developed well, so that students of a wide variety of abilities can take courses which extend the learning they did in main school.

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

- Ensure that students make better progress in science in Years 7 to 9 by ensuring that more emphasis is given to the development of the skills of scientific thought and enquiry; and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 particularly by boys.
- In those subjects where it is relatively weak, take steps to increase the progress made in the 6th form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement and standards are good. When students enter the school in Year 7 their standards are broadly average. They make satisfactory progress in their first three years, though their progress showed a decline in 2006 in science while it is improving in mathematics. By the end of Year 9, their standards remain broadly average. By the end of Year 11 good progress is made by most groups of students, including those with special needs. The standards reached are good. This marks a good improvement since 2004.

The progress made in different subjects is quite variable. In science for example, the 2006 GCSE and GNVQ results show that particularly good progress is made in Years 10 and 11. This represents a good improvement on 2005. However, in mathematics, progress, while improving, remains satisfactory largely because of some boys not doing as well as expected.

In the 6th form, students make satisfactory and improving progress and the standards they reached in 2006 were above the national average. In different subjects, progress varies widely.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Overall students enjoy school a great deal. This is not only reflected in their good attendance but also in their engagement in lessons. Students are reflective, mature and confident. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Because of the work that the school undertakes to develop some aspects of students' cultural views, through for example, work on refugees, anti racism and world faiths and because of the school's European and international links, incidents of racism are very rare. The relationships between staff and students are very strong. There is a friendly ethos so that social areas at breaks and lunchtimes are used largely harmoniously by students from all age groups. The school works exceptionally well to prepare students for their working lives through, for example, its pioneering work on enterprise and its good quality careers education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned, lively and interesting. This is one reason why students' enjoyment of school is high. In most lessons, students are for at least some of the time actively engaged in purposeful activities rather than being passive recipients of information. Students' ability to work independently is impressive. A good example was seen in a Year 11 lesson where students' had done a large amount of good quality independent work and were able to talk about it knowledgeably and with enthusiasm.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is good and it meets statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11 there is a good variety of courses of different types. This allows students with different aspirations and interests, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, to achieve success. The result is that they make good progress and achieve well. Recent changes to the personal development programme, known as ECM (Every Child Matters) within the school, ensure that matters such as personal safety, health and economic awareness are taught explicitly and this is reflected in students' good personal development. The school is influential in developing commitment to this across the local area. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities and out of hours provision.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Although Longsands College is a large institution, it is one where it is very clear that individual students matter. The school works hard to ensure that students feel safe in school. There are stringent safeguarding checks and child protection arrangements are very secure. Students are well informed about future options. Parents are regularly informed about the progress that their child is making. Parents of students with learning difficulties or disabilities are fully involved in reviewing their child's progress and in the construction of individual education plans. The coordinator for special educational needs has clearly established parents' trust. There are good links with local authority specialists to support students who are experiencing difficulties or require specific expertise. There is a strong careers programme. Work related learning is a strong feature of the school and the steadily increasing numbers going onto further education reflects their growing ambitions and the development of their skills which allow them to take this step.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The Principal provides strong leadership and a very clear commitment to the personal development and success of students. This commitment permeates the school's work.

The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate, thorough and takes the views of students and parents well into account. Plans for improvement are good. Firm actions are taken to counter areas of underperformance. Those leaders who have responsibility for subject departments make good use of students' assessment

data in order to identify areas of weakness. In the mathematics department, for example, this information has been used to develop stronger guidance for teachers on ways of teaching the ideas which students have found difficult. There is a good arrangement by which members of the school's senior leadership team provide support and challenge to others in the school who hold responsibilities.

The governing body is well informed about the school's work and keeps up to date by attendance at governing body training events. The school's finances are in robust health because a sum has been set aside for equipping some new buildings. The budget is spent wisely, and good value for money is obtained.



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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>	<b>College 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>	2	2
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	2	2
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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1	
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	1	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2	
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	2	
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

7 February 2007

Dear Students

Longsands College, Longsands Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 1LQ

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we inspected your school on 6 February. We enjoyed meeting you and talking with you.

We found that your school is good and that it has some outstanding features. A very strong feature is the way your school looks after you, making sure that you are safe and encouraging you to be healthy. Your school also takes a lot of care to make sure that when new students join from primary schools they settle down quickly. The same care is taken to ensure that when you leave you have all the information you need to make good choices as to what to do next.

Your behaviour is good and the relationship between you and your teachers is a real strength. Your enjoyment of school is outstanding. The progress you make between joining the school in Year 7 and the Year 11 examinations is good. This is because teaching is good. Standards, including in the 6th form, are high. You will be pleased to know that work is being done to make them even better. You are benefiting from the school being a specialist college. This has provided some exciting opportunities for you and has also meant that your teachers can use the latest technology to help you to learn.

We have suggested to your school that to help you even more, work is done to help students make good progress in science in Years 7 to 9 and to help boys to do better in GCSE mathematics. There is a small number of subjects in the 6th form where we feel that students' progress should be improved.

Best wishes for your future success

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector