

# Guthlaxton College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120256
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	291683
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Champak Chauhan HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1429
6th form	386
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Dutton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Fields
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Station Road Wigston LE18 2DS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2881611
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2881432

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Guthlaxton College is situated just outside Leicester. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is considerably below average but this masks the range of social and economic deprivation suffered by many. Those identified with learning difficulties and disabilities are well below average. About one in ten students is from a minority ethnic background. Guthlaxton has specialist status as a performing arts college.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The college's overall effectiveness is good. Standards in the GCSE examinations have varied over recent years but there has been a steady overall improvement in the proportion of students achieving at least five good grades.

The improving standards are largely the result of good teaching. Teachers are dedicated and hard working. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are shared with the students. There is emphasis on giving more responsibility to students for their own learning. Students have good attitudes and most are keen to learn. There is a very small minority, however, who sometimes engage in aggressive and rude behaviour. A few teachers sometimes struggle to cope with this. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics varies from good to inadequate. This explains why results in the GCSE examinations are not as good as in English. Students benefit from good oral feedback in many lessons. Marking, however, is inconsistent and does not always indicate to the students how their work could be improved. Data on the students' prior attainment is readily available but it is not yet routinely used by all teachers to enhance the students' progress. The students' personal development and well-being are good as a result of the good provision for students' care, guidance and support. The college gives a high priority towards meeting the five outcomes for Every Child Matters. Students are increasingly aware of adopting healthier lifestyles through the promotion of sports and healthier eating. However, some sixth form students complained that they did not have timetabled physical education lessons. Students are aware of health issues through their personal and social education lessons, and can see the college nurse at lunchtimes if necessary. Students generally feel safe and are keen to adopt safe practices. They report some instances of bullying but state that these are dealt with effectively when reported to the staff. Not all, however, report such incidents. Most students enjoy their education and their attendance is generally satisfactory. Students make a very good contribution to the community through, for example, charitable activities such as sponsored cycle rides and raising money for a teenage cancer trust. Performing arts students also give concerts and hold productions for various community organisations. Students are aware of what they need to do to prepare for their future economic well-being. In addition to taking relevant examination courses, there is a young enterprise scheme in the sixth form and enterprise days in Years 10 and 11. The annual careers convention held for students in October attracts over 50 representatives from local businesses.

Leadership and management are good. The principal provides excellent leadership and the senior leaders have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have good oversight of the work of the college. The college evaluates its own performance well and has a good capacity to improve even further. It provides good value for money.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Students achieve well and standards have been rising. Performance in the AS examinations in Year 12 varies widely but results at A level are good. This is because the teaching and learning are good. The improvement in the facilities for private study has enabled students to work more independently. The number of students who leave courses is declining because of improvements in their care, guidance and support. Students experiencing difficulties are identified early and provided with appropriate help. A good partnership is being created with the local college of further education which

offers students the chance to study vocational courses. The 'Post-16 Task Force' gives students many opportunities to contribute to the community, for example, by hearing young children read in primary schools. The newly appointed head of sixth form gives strong leadership. However, a relatively heavy teaching commitment reduces the effectiveness of her work.

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

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.
- Improve marking and assessment procedures so that they enable students to make better progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall, students make satisfactory progress from age 11 to 16 and attain standards at GCSE which are just below average. They transfer to the college from nearby high schools after having taken the national tests at age 14. Their progress at Key Stage 4 slows because of the turbulence this transfer causes. However, they are taught well and their progress improves, ensuring that they achieve the expected standards in most subjects by age 16. Students in the sixth form then make good progress and they achieved good standards in 2006. The progress of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to other groups because their work is closely monitored. Students from minority ethnic groups make better progress than others. Standards have risen steadily at GCSE and in 2006 they were the highest achieved by the college. Standards achieved in English are average but in mathematics they are below average. Standards achieved by students at the end of the sixth form have risen steadily with greater numbers achieving the higher grades A and B.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enjoy college and have good attitudes to their learning. In most lessons, they work hard and remain focused to the end. They are willing to answer questions, offer opinions and they work in a responsible manner with their peers. Attendance is generally satisfactory and gradually improving. Some students, however, are unduly late for their lessons. Behaviour is good but in a very small number of lessons pockets of misbehaviour still occur. This is linked to the quality of teaching. Students show maturity in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good. The considerate behaviour of most students to teachers and towards each other indicates their moral maturity. Students are confident and polite and they have acquired well the social skills they need to become active members of the community. Performing arts make a substantial contribution to students' personal development. The college's Big Band's performance, for example, was outstanding and gave an uplifting start to the day in assembly. Relationships are good. Students in the sixth form make a significant contribution to the positive college ethos. They act as good role models and help their younger peers well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to engage the students. Lessons are well planned to include a variety of tasks, with well prepared resources to support learning. Effective plenary sessions enable the students to share their work and for teachers to evaluate the learning that has occurred. Students enjoy and take a pride in their work and are excited by the practical activities offered. The typically good relationships enable students to feel confident to challenge and question their teachers, and to work well in groups. In the best lessons, there is an industrious atmosphere and students are engrossed in their work. The realistically high expectations of the teachers and the persistent challenge offered enable students to develop responsibility for their own learning. They set themselves targets, make decisions, constantly evaluate their work and offer advice to each other about how they can improve. In the weakest lessons, opportunities to share views and to evaluate learning were missed.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is adaptable and responsive to students' needs. The college provides a good range of GCSE courses, with the number of vocational courses having increased in recent years. It works closely with partners to improve the number and variety of these courses. A notable feature of the curriculum is that students can choose individual option subjects in such a way as to package them together to meet their particular needs and interests. The curriculum is kept under review and it has been revised regularly to respond effectively to the changing needs of the students. The college provides well for the development of students' basic skills. Specialist status has had a positive impact on the provision for performing arts. All students follow an arts course in Years 10 and 11 and much of the good practice from those subjects is being applied more widely in other subjects. Students say they thoroughly enjoy taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and have the opportunity to suggest other activities which increase that range. In the sixth form, the range of AS and A2 options is very wide. However, there is currently only one vocational course which enables students to progress from the course they have undertaken in Years 10 and 11. There is no corresponding provision for those students who follow the other two vocational courses to enable them to progress from GCSE level.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The college has recently restructured its management and pastoral system to give greater emphasis to academic progress and the removal of barriers to achievement. The student support unit is effective in helping students vulnerable to exclusion and its creation has led to a dramatic fall in fixed-term exclusions. Students at risk and other vulnerable students also receive strong

support from the learning support unit. When necessary, such students also have the benefit of professional services provided by specialist outside agencies. Tutors contribute well to many aspects of students' personal development, including citizenship and careers. Tutors also assist well with target setting. Assessment practices, however, are inconsistent. Although students are aware of their levels or target grades and there are examples of outstanding practice, they do not always know by what criteria their work will be assessed. The considerable data on their prior attainment is not routinely used by all teachers in their planning and teaching. The required procedures for health and safety and for child protection are in place. The provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for those who have been identified as gifted and talented, is good.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The principal offers excellent leadership to the college. He has enhanced college provision and led the steady improvement in standards over many years. His open leadership style means that staff find him approachable. The principal and other senior leaders work well together as a team. They complement each other's skills well and the recently expanded membership of the team has given the college a good capacity to drive forward further improvement. They have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses through a regular programme of evaluating its work. They know accurately, for example, where the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning are, and have implemented programmes to support teachers where this has been necessary. However, some weaknesses in aspects of the teaching and learning in a few subjects still remain. This is because of various reasons, including the unavoidable use of temporary teachers and the relative inexperience of a few key permanent teachers. They are also aware that the misbehaviour of a few students is an issue and are trying to address this through appropriate measures, including the recent restructure of the pastoral system and investment in the student support unit.

The work of the college is propelled by a detailed development plan which has appropriate and relevant targets for improvement. This planning process is thorough and progress is regularly evaluated. Middle managers are made accountable for provision in their areas by a good mixture of support and challenge by senior leaders. The governing body meets regularly and its work is underpinned by appropriate committees and working groups. Governors have a good understanding of provision in the college through, for instance, regular visits and through presentations done by staff. They hold the college to account well.





## Annex A

## 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>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school'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>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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>	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	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

<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>	2	2

<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.

## Annex A

**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	3	
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 school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming us to Guthlaxton recently. We enjoyed talking with many of you. Below are the main findings of the inspection but I hope you read the full report.

**What the college does particularly well**

You are offered a good quality of education. Your teachers are hard working and they teach you well. They know their subjects well and they offer you a good range of learning activities. This enables you to make good progress. As you know, standards have improved, both at GCSE and A level. The results in 2006 were the best the college has achieved. More of you achieved good results in the GCSE and more of you are achieving the higher grades at A level. The college cares for you well and you are given good guidance and support. Your personal development and well-being are good. The quality of the curriculum is good and many of you participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities you are offered. The college's specialist status in the performing arts enables many of you to develop your skills and aptitudes in these subjects well. The principal, Mr Fields, provides excellent leadership. Overall, the leadership and management of the college are good.

**What could be improved**

Most of you behave well but a very small number are rude and aggressive to the staff. This is unacceptable and hinders the progress for all. In addition, some of you are not always punctual to lessons. The teaching in mathematics is too variable and in some of these lessons you do not learn as much as you should. Most of your teachers regularly mark and assess your work. However, teachers need to give you more indication of how you can improve your work. They also need to use other assessment information of your abilities more fully when planning their lessons.