

Grobby Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120270
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	291689
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	887
6th form	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Prattley
Headteacher	Caroline Wilkins
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	Ratby Road Grobby Leicester LE6 0GE
Telephone number	0116 2879921
Fax number	0116 2870189

Age group	14-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Groby is a specialist language college serving a relatively affluent area. The majority of students are of White British heritage. There are small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, all of whom are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs.

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 provides a satisfactory education for its students. Students leave Year 11 with standards that are above average. Achievement is satisfactory, both in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, because the teaching and curriculum are satisfactory. Work is often pitched at the right level for the students but too little is demanded of them in terms of their responses in lessons, such as answering questions and writing their own notes, so they often remain passive learners. Where classes are organised by ability, the work itself is sometimes too hard or too easy.

Students' personal development is good. They behave well and show a concern for the safety and well-being of others as they move around the premises. Students enjoy coming to college because they get on so well with their teachers and their peers. The school uses its specialist status well, especially in developing students' understanding of different countries and cultures.

In recent years there have been clear signs of underachievement. Satisfactory leadership and management are ensuring that any underachievement is being tackled and standards are improving. Nevertheless, the college's leaders have been relatively slow to take actions to address weaknesses when they arise. New systems for checking the quality of teaching are now providing an accurate picture of the teaching in Years 10 and 11, but they only started in September 2006. The same focus has not been placed on the sixth form, so the college's evaluation of its work in these years is overly generous. Part of the problem lies with the confusion about who is responsible for aspects of the school's management, so governors find it difficult to ensure that the school is doing all it should. This leads to some important policies not being implemented consistently or requirements not being met. There are good systems in place to support vulnerable students, for example, but care, guidance and support are only satisfactory because other checks, such as those relating to child protection legislation, are not carried out rigorously enough.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Students join and leave the sixth form with standards that are broadly average, because the teaching and curriculum are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach, but often talk too much, rather than actively engaging students in their learning. The curriculum provides adequately for the needs of more-able students. There is a wide range of academic and vocational courses on offer for them at Level 3. Lower-attaining students are given good support to continue their studies in other institutions that offer a wider range of lower-level courses. The college fails to provide religious education, as required by law. Students are well cared for in terms of their pastoral needs and guidance for future education and employment. Academic guidance is good, but the lack of rigorous child protection and health and safety checks means that the overall quality of care, guidance and support is only satisfactory. Attendance in the sixth form is not monitored, so the college cannot be sure who is, or isn't, on site. Personal development is good. Students act responsibly

and work hard. However, despite enjoying coming to college, they are often too passive in lessons.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The sixth form runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, but there is no clear vision for its development because no one person has a clear overview of all aspects of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify management roles and responsibilities to ensure that actions to improve the college's performance are implemented more quickly.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met.
- Ensure that all health and safety and child protection procedures are managed consistently.
- Raise the quality of teaching, particularly by ensuring that teachers demand a more active response from their students in lessons, and that planned activities consistently challenge students of all abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory for all groups of students. Students join the college with standards that are above average. They make satisfactory progress and leave Year 11 with above-average standards and satisfactorily equipped with the skills they will need in later life. Achievement in modern foreign languages is particularly good and befits the college's specialist status. All students study a foreign language, which is a much higher proportion than in most schools, and results are well above average. There have been clear signs of underachievement in recent years, caused by students' relatively poor performance in mathematics. However, the lessons learnt from developing strengths in the teaching of languages, together with the appointment of new staff, have led to improved standards and achievement in mathematics.

Those students who stay on to the sixth form join it with standards that are average compared to sixth forms nationally. They too make steady progress and leave with standards that are average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enjoy college and display mature and confident attitudes. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They get on well with each other, so incidents of bullying or racism are very rare. They demonstrated their understanding of the feelings of people different cultures when discussing, for example, the different views that may be held over the Iraq war. This example was not prompted by a teacher, but was part of a well-argued discussion in their free time. Such discussions also help to develop their good understanding of what it means to be part of a community. The college council plays a significant role in taking major decisions, such as carrying out negotiations with caterers over the provision of healthier meals. Behaviour is good, and especially so around the college, where students demonstrate their good awareness of safety. They move calmly and efficiently down narrow corridors and stairs,

so nobody is jostled. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, but some students do not always pay attention and continue to talk while the teacher is trying to teach. Students are often too reliant on their teacher and fail to put themselves forward in lessons. They know, for example, that if they wait long enough the teacher will answer a question rather than insisting on a student doing so.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Recent training has improved the quality of teaching in many areas of the college. Teachers possess a good knowledge of their subject and of their students, so they are able to match the level of difficulty of the work to the broad needs of the class they are teaching. This is particularly effective in mixed-ability classes, where teachers are careful to plan work that is suitable for the individuals within the class. However, where classes are set by ability the teacher often feels that the work will be suitable for all students. This is not the case, so some find it too easy, while others find it too hard and progress for the whole class is slowed as a consequence. Teachers make good use of the resources available to them to make lessons come alive. However, teachers do not expect enough from students in response to challenges and questions. Students often only have to provide one-word answers to questions, without explaining what they mean or justifying their view. In some lessons, particularly in the sixth form, there is too much direction from teachers and students become rather passive learners. As a result, it is often the teacher, not the student, who is being made to think.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The college provides a satisfactory range of courses in Years 10 and 11. There is a weakness, however, in ICT, where nobody can be sure that all pupils are receiving their entitlement. In the sixth form, students can choose from a good range of academic and vocational courses at Level 3, but as there is no religious education provided, provision is no more than satisfactory.

The range of extra clubs and activities on offer is good, with strengths in sport, performing arts and modern foreign languages. These play an important part in developing students' understanding of other cultures and how to stay healthy. Many female students across the country tend to shy away from sport in Years 10 and 11, but not here. The application of one large group of Year 10 girls in rounders was particularly impressive, with all virtually exhausted by their efforts at the end. Good use is made of language college status to provide many trips to, and links with, other countries so students gain a much deeper understanding than is usually seen of what life is like for ordinary people across the globe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students feel safe in the college and know that any cases of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Staff are aware of child protection procedures and of health and safety guidelines,

but the responsibilities for ensuring that all child protection and health and safety checks are carried out are dispersed across the college. This means that there are gaps in procedures where it is not clear who has responsibility, which in turn means that the college is not meeting all its responsibilities. Risk assessments are carried out rigorously in science and technology; for example, where the technicians are responsible, but in some other more general areas of the school nobody checks that procedures are clear or being followed..

Students receive good guidance on courses and careers, so they are confident about what they want to do and how to go about it. The college makes good use of its links with other providers to ensure that lower-attaining students continue their education at institutions that provide a more suitable range of courses. Vulnerable pupils are particularly well supported. The tracking and recording of students' progress as they move through the college are good, although the use of 'traffic lights' to identify underachievement is not always applied accurately. One great strength of the system is that it provides frequent reports, both for students and parents, on how well students are progressing. In some subjects this is taken a step further to ensure students know what they need to do to improve their progress, but in others students are still not clear how they can gain better grades.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The college managers have shown they can improve performance, but it has been a slow journey. Where somebody is given a specific responsibility, the results are clear. Language college status, for example, is coordinated by one person. Achievement in modern foreign languages has improved from among the worst to the best in just three years, and the lessons learnt are now being used to improve other areas of the school's work. In other areas it is not clear who is responsible for ensuring that people are carrying out their roles effectively, so the school does not meet all of its responsibilities, such as carrying out risk assessments. Governors support the school well, but rely too heavily on the principal for evaluating its work without carrying out their own checks.

The very best teachers in the school are now being used to provide examples of excellence from which others can learn. However, the college has only been able to identify the detailed reasons for better or worse performance since September, when a new system for checking lessons was introduced.

Managers have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in Years 10 and 11, but their evaluation of the sixth form is inaccurate, partly because there is nobody with overall responsibility for the sixth form who gets a complete picture of standards and provision.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
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	3	

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	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	3	

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?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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.

Annex A

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	3	
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	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Groby Community College, Groby, Leicestershire LE6 0GE

Many thanks for helping us with the inspection of your college. You spoke to us honestly and openly, which helped us to get a clear idea of how you felt about your education. We were most impressed by the way you get on so well with one another and the maturity you show when discussing contentious topics.

Much of the work of the college is satisfactory, but prevented from being good because it is not always clear who is in charge of some of the things that should be happening; for example, checking that all the regulations for your health and safety have been carried out. So, we have asked the college managers to make sure that everybody knows what their job is and that somebody has responsibility for making sure that they are carried out.

Overall we found you are getting a satisfactory education. We understand why you like coming to college and the informal, friendly atmosphere. You have a good range of clubs and extra activities, especially in sport, drama and foreign languages. You make the sort of progress that we expect to see, but you can do better. One of the things we have asked your teachers to do is to make sure that you play a greater part in lessons and the work you are given to do is always challenging. Some of you are content to just sit and listen, when you could be volunteering to answer questions or give opinions. You rightly feel that the staff have your best interests at heart, and that you get good advice on your futures.

Thanks once again for your help and best wishes for your future.

David Driscoll Lead inspector