



Thomas Estley Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120275
Local Authority Leicestershire
Inspection number 291692
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Station Road
School category	Community		Broughton Astley
Age range of pupils	11–14		Leicester LE9 6PT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01455 283263
Number on roll (school)	741	Fax number	01455 285758
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Bernadette Shaw
		Principal	Tim Moralee
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–14	17–18 January 2007	291692

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a larger than average middle school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. An average number have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good college with many outstanding features. Pupils, parents, staff and governors are rightly proud of it. Over a third of parents responded to the questionnaire for this inspection and virtually all were very positive about the college's work. A parent, reflecting on a child's progress at the college writes: 'He has changed into a confident teenager who has found his place without any pressure and who has kept his sense of compassion'. Similar views were expressed in numerous responses. The principal and senior leaders provide outstanding leadership. This helps to ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. An outstanding curriculum and other extra-curricular activities contribute to pupils' achievements. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and parents praise the high quality of support they receive. Standards are consistently above average and pupils' achievement is good. Standards in mathematics are exceptionally high. Another strong feature of the college is the partnership work with parents and the wider community. This helps to inform and improve provision for pupils and other adult users of the college. Regular sampling of pupils' views ensures that the college knows accurately how well the needs of pupils are being met. It is also highly effective in ensuring pupils exercise their rights and responsibilities and adopt healthy lifestyles. Teaching and learning are good. At its best, teaching is vibrant and imaginative. It stimulates pupils' creativity and they say that they have fun, thereby ensuring their positive gains in learning. In subjects where teachers set short-term targets for improvement and check work through careful marking, pupils make the best progress. However, this practice is not consistent across all subjects, resulting in a lack of challenge for the more able pupils, particularly girls. A recently introduced, streamlined tracking system is helping teachers to more readily identify and tackle underachievement. The college provides good care, guidance and support. Robust systems are in place to ensure the welfare, protection and safety of pupils. Pupils are carefully prepared and supported as they move on to the next stage of education. Leadership and management are good overall. However, the rigour of senior leaders' evaluation is not matched by all subject leaders, who play a major role in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. A shortcoming is a lack of emphasis on how well all pupils are learning,. Nevertheless, the college has improved since the last inspection and has been successful in raising standards significantly. Recent appointments have greatly strengthened the leadership team and sharpened teachers' focus on checking pupils' progress in all subjects. The college's capacity to improve is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able girls by raising teachers' expectations and providing more challenging work.
- Improve the consistency of evaluations of pupils' learning carried out by subject leaders, using the best examples as models.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Pupils make good progress during their time at the college. They enter the college with standards just above national averages. In the 2006 national tests, standards attained by the Year 9 pupils were well above average. This represents good achievement. The national test results showed significant improvement compared with 2005. In mathematics, the improvement was particularly strong and standards are exceptionally high. In science, standards are well above average. In English, standards are above average. The school is rightly focused on improving the standards and progress of more able pupils. Teacher assessments in art, design and technology and modern foreign languages show standards to be well above average. Targets for 2007 are suitably challenging and Year 9 pupils are progressing well towards them. There is some variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils. The strongly supportive ethos of the college enables pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to achieve particularly well. For more able girls, achievement is satisfactory but this is lower than for other groups. The college recognises this issue and is taking suitable remedial action, but as yet it is too early to assess the full impact of action taken.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils thrive because of the college's very supportive ethos which is described as 'the pursuit of excellence'. Pupils' excellent behaviour, attendance and sense of enjoyment are a testament to this. They are extremely positive about the exciting things they do at the college, such as the programme of modules, and they are enthusiastic about the very many extra-curricular activities that the college offers. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are very responsible young people and make a positive contribution to the community. This is evident in their very many charity collections and in the thoughtful way in which they work with pupils from an adjacent special school. In this, they are particularly sensitive and value the contribution that these pupils bring to lessons. Pupils are very clear about what they want for their college and are confident when expressing their views. This confidence comes from knowing that they will be listened to and that their views matter. They have embraced the ideals of a healthy lifestyle, particularly when it comes to physical exercise, and emotional well-being. Pupils feel particularly safe because there are effective structures to support them, such as the peer mentoring initiative. Above all, pupils know that adults in the college have their best interests at heart. They make outstanding progress towards acquiring the qualities that will equip them for their working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching throughout the school enables pupils to enjoy their education and to learn well. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and plan their lessons effectively. They use a good variety of resources to motivate pupils including the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Relationships and behaviour in the classroom are excellent. Pupils listen well and respect the views of others. They are encouraged to express their own opinions which they do with confidence. While most pupils are challenged to do their best by teachers, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils, especially girls. Good challenge was seen in mathematics and in a Year 7 personal, social and health education lesson on personal morality. 'It's really good, it makes you think' said one pupil; a view echoed by others. Assessment is good but there is some inconsistency between subjects. In the most effective examples, pupils know their targets and receive good comments from teachers which help them to improve their work. Teachers set challenging short-term goals and pupils' progress towards these are carefully tracked. The inconsistent practice in the use of assessment information is being tackled robustly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum which results in pupils enjoying college life and being well motivated in their work. This has been recognised externally by the Schools' Curriculum Award which the college has received five times. The curriculum is driven by its aim of 'modelling tomorrow's global citizen', an aim which is implemented very well. An exemplary feature is the programme of modules which pupils experience for four weeks each year. These contribute very significantly to pupils' achievement and enjoyment. The extensive range of modules successfully develops pupils' skills in a number of respects, including financial capability. The college's links with industry are put to productive use and these support the college's programme of careers education very well. Another feature of the curriculum is the excellent link pupils make with the local community which enables them to contribute positively, for example producing the parish newspaper and designing a sculpture for the village. Most unusually for pupils of this age, they visit universities, including Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and also have opportunities to follow vocational courses, including construction and beauty care at a local college of further education. Such activities contribute to pupils being well prepared for working life. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit greatly from a well coordinated programme, including a wild garden project on an allotment. The timetabled curriculum is well complemented by a very wide-ranging programme of popular clubs and societies. At the time of the inspection, the school was preparing not just one, but three musical productions, one for each year group. The normal range of sports is augmented by, for example, boxing and sailing, helping to ensure pupils adopt healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college's good care and support for pupils is based on a real desire to provide the best possible, and is successful because of effective communication between staff. The college works closely with outside agencies and has an excellent relationship with parents. This means that pupils have a good and rounded support for their personal development. Provision for pupils who are vulnerable, including those who find learning hard, is very well thought-out, and enables them to make good progress in their learning. Pupils coming from the primary schools settle quickly because of the good links that have been established and because of the college's supportive ethos. Pupils transferring to the upper schools are helped effectively by subject teachers to choose their examination options. This has involved all departments in reviewing the information they use and looking at ways of improving it to ensure that pupils make well informed choices. This model has rightly been held up to other local schools as an example of effective practice. Pupils know their target levels in all subjects but guidance to enable them to progress to the next level of attainment varies in usefulness. Although there is some very good practice this is not consistent throughout the college. Great emphasis is placed on pupils' safety and the systems to safeguard pupils are rigorous.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The principal and senior managers provide excellent leadership. They are very effective in providing a purposeful direction to staff which is focused on raising standards. This has led to significant improvement. Senior leaders also ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being are included in all of the college's endeavours, resulting in impressive outcomes. Systems for monitoring are very well established, including the observations of lessons, and the college's self evaluation is accurate. Senior leaders are rigorous in this process but not all subject leaders' evaluations are as robust, particularly in regard to checking how well all pupils make gains in learning. This is particularly so in checking the progress of more able girls. Overall, however, the college has a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses and plans have identified the right priorities for improvement. Governance is good with some aspects that are exemplary, most notably governors' commitment to be well informed about the college's work and holding senior leaders to account for standards attained. The college has improved since the last inspection and has been successful in raising standards significantly.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
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

- As you know, your college was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first I would like to thank you for your very warm welcome and cooperation during our visit. We really enjoyed meeting you and value your comments and opinions. The inspection found that yours is a good college with many outstanding features. You, your parents and staff are rightly proud of your college. The very positive things about the college are:
- The principal and other senior staff lead the college extremely well which helps all staff to ensure that you attend regularly, enjoy learning and behave very well.
- Standards of attainment are well above national averages in the majority of subjects and are particularly high in mathematics. Most of you make good progress by the time you leave the college in English, mathematics and science.
- Lots of teachers make sure that you have interesting and stimulating work which helps to bring out the best in you. The 'modules programme' is a particularly striking example of this.
- The college allows you to express your opinions and views in a good number of ways and you do this very responsibly. It makes a real difference to the quality of your life in the college.
- You like to get involved in the very many extra-curricular activities, including sports and the performing arts. Your participation in these is a vote of confidence for the rich educational opportunities provided by the college.
- You impressed us with choosing to lead healthy lifestyles because the college works hard to enable you to do so. These are the things we think the college needs to do more work on. They are:
- Teachers to provide greater challenge for the more able girls so that their rate of progress increases more rapidly.
- All subject leaders to check closely how well you are learning so that your achievement is even better. I wish you all the very best for the future.