

Linton Village College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110862
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310445
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
College	809
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gill Carter
Headteacher	Ms Caroline Derbyshire
Date of previous college inspection	17 November 2003
College address	Cambridge Road Linton Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB21 4JB
Telephone number	01223891233
Fax number	01223894476

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Introduction

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

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: achievement and standards, the school's evaluation of teaching and learning, the progress made by higher attaining students in English at Key Stage 3, how the school's specialism in business and enterprise benefits students and why the school is successful. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, scrutiny of students' work, analysis of students' performance data, and interviews with students, the school's leaders and managers and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the college

The school is in a village about 10 miles southeast of Cambridge. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is about average. The school is in an area where rates of social and economic disadvantage are comparatively low, and students' eligibility for free school meals is well below the national average. It has specialist status for business and enterprise.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 1

Linton Village College is an outstanding school in which students prosper. The vast majority of parents speak highly of it. One set of parents said '...a very good school - we are very lucky' and another: 'We are proud of our school'.

When students join in Year 7, their standards of work are generally broadly average. By the time of the national tests in Year 9, standards are usually above average. The 2007 provisional results suggest they were exceptionally high. The 2007 results for Year 11 students were also exceptionally high. This represents outstanding progress. In English in recent years, the more able had not made sufficient progress in Years 7 to 9. The evidence from this inspection, as well as from the provisional 2007 end of Year 9 national test results, show that this has improved significantly. The progress made by students is the result of several factors: good quality teaching, outstanding care, guidance and support, students' good behaviour and willingness to learn, their exceptional enjoyment of school and their good attendance. In addition, the curriculum is outstanding because it caters so well for students of different aptitudes and interests. The curriculum benefits greatly from the school's business and enterprise specialism. The excellence of the school's provision is a result of outstanding leadership and management.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding, encouraged by the rich range of opportunities the school provides. For example, some train to become junior sports leaders and help to run extra-curricular sports clubs. The school's business enterprise specialism provides the opportunity for all students to be involved in an enterprise project in Year 9. This encourages teamwork, problem solving and the taking of initiative. Along with other aspects of the specialism, it gives students a very good experience of business. This is a powerful contributor to students' outstanding preparation for future economic well-being. Also notable in contributing to this are students' outstanding literacy and numeracy development, the proficiency of many in information and communication technology (ICT), their good powers of concentration and general confidence in meeting others. Many students are involved in helping others through charity fund raising. A high proportion of Year 11 students has responsibility as prefects and many are involved in the induction of Year 6 pupils into the school. Work with a nearby special school, and with a school in South Africa, extends students' awareness of those beyond school. Students' contribution to the community is outstanding. Behaviour is good and students know how to stay safe. Students say, and most parents agree, that though there is some bullying at the school it is not frequent. When it occurs, it is generally handled promptly and effectively. Students adopt healthy lifestyles. The amount of time devoted to physical education (PE) in Key Stage 3 meets the government's expectations. In Key Stage 4, the amount is lower. This is compensated for by the numbers who also take PE or dance as a GCSE optional subject, and the large numbers who participate in school sports clubs. This, as well as evidence from a health questionnaire, showing that the extent to which students exercise and the extent to which they avoid harmful substances, including drugs, alcohol and tobacco, means that their healthiness is outstanding.

Teaching and learning are at least good and in some instances outstanding. Lessons are well planned and contain a good range of activities, which maintain students' interest. Students are given good opportunities for discussion and independent work. Teachers know their subjects well and lessons move along with a good pace. The level of work is sufficiently challenging and lessons are often designed to cater for students of different ability within the same class. However, while at the end of some lessons the learning is usefully reviewed, this is by no means

universal. Questioning is too variable in quality. Not enough opportunities are taken to use questions as a means of assessing how well students understand the work they are doing, so that the teaching can be adjusted if required. The marking of their work is, in some cases, admirably detailed with good advice to students on how to improve it. However, some work is not marked well or is not marked at all. Students say that homework is generally set, but they think that, occasionally, it seems to have no real purpose. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given very good support and they make very good progress as a result.

The curriculum is outstanding. For a relatively small school, there is a good variety of subjects to choose from in Years 10 and 11 and there is an impressive range of enrichment activities throughout the school. The curriculum is well matched to the range of interests and aspirations which students have. So, in addition to the more traditional subjects, there are a good number of vocational courses; one is run in conjunction with another school. There is provision for work-based learning, run in conjunction with a nearby college. In Years 7 to 9, those who would benefit are able to follow an accelerated course in mathematics, eventually culminating in their taking GCSE a year early. Some are able to take GCSE French two years early. In science, some students begin their science GCSE work in Year 9. A course in 'learning to learn' is run with some year groups. The school's evaluation of this shows that it plays an important part in promoting successful learning.

The care, guidance and support which students receive are outstanding. Students have a periodic personal mentoring session with their tutor and report that they find such sessions are valuable. Any intractable or complex problems, which may best be solved by reference to outside agencies, are dealt with through a recently formed 'locality team', a multidisciplinary group of professionals dealing with health and social problems. There is a good system for identifying whether or not students are underachieving and a range of effective actions are taken if they are. The result is that all groups of students do well and make at least good progress. Students' academic progress is regularly tracked and actions are taken if they are falling behind. They are generally aware of how well they are doing in relation to their targets, though this is more evident for those in Years 10 and 11, and know what they need to do to achieve them. The school fulfils its statutory duties in terms of child protection arrangements.

The principal provides very strong, clear direction and very strong leadership. She is very well supported by her leadership team. There is a strong commitment from the team to develop the school so that it is outstanding in all respects. The approach to improvement is very well considered. It is based on detailed evaluations (often including surveys of parent and student opinion); clear planning and relentless monitoring of progress. Those who have responsibilities within the school are well supported by the school's approach to line management, which also ensures that they feel accountable.

There is clear evidence that the school's capacity to improve is outstanding. For example, until recently pupils' attendance was below the national average. As a result of the school's work, along with other schools in the area, the extent to which students were missing school to go on family holidays has been reduced. Along with the school's very clear and public commitment to the importance of education, attendance is now better than the national average. The response to the slower than expected progress of more able students in English in Years 7 to 9 has been handled robustly and with success. A process in which national test papers have been analysed to find out which parts of the subject are causing most difficulty has been used to improve learning in science. However, some evaluative work carried out by the school does not pay sufficient heed to the experiences of students from different ethnic groups. For example, attendance and exclusion figures given to governors are not analysed by ethnicity. The governing

body nevertheless plays an important part in the school's development. It challenges the school and governors are actively involved in evaluations such as the reviews of faculties.

What the college should do to improve further

- Ensure that the good practice in the best lessons, such as good quality questioning, helpful marking and the review of each lesson's learning becomes the norm.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

15 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Linton Village College, Linton, Cambridge CB21 4JB

Thank you for being so helpful when I inspected your school. It was a pleasure talking with those of you I met. I was impressed by how articulate you are and how confident you are when speaking to an adult you have not met before.

I found that your school is outstanding. The progress you make academically is outstanding as is your personal development. Your behaviour is good, and so is your attendance. Your school provides excellent opportunities for you. Teaching is of good quality, the curriculum caters well for your different interests and abilities. The specialism in business and enterprise provides you with some exceptional opportunities. There is a very good range of extension activities. In addition, you are well guided and supported. Many of you praised the mentoring you receive from your tutors.

Your school is exceptionally well led and managed. The principal and her team work hard to find out what needs to be improved, develop good strategies to bring about improvement and check that they are working.

There are some things that can be better still. There is some outstanding teaching, and more could be of that quality. I have asked the school to work on developing lessons so that there is more good quality questioning, more helpful marking and regular end of lesson reviews of what you have learned. This will help you to learn even more successfully. You can help by continuing to attend well.

Best wishes for your future,

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector.