

# Sawtry Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110897
<b>Local Authority</b>	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310458
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lindsay Hebditch 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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1402
6th form	195
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Leaton
<b>Principal</b>	Mr James Stewart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Fen Lane Sawtry Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 5TQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01487830701
<b>Fax number</b>	01487831679

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Sawtry Community College is a large school which serves a mixed catchment area in north Cambridgeshire. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low, and the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below that found in schools nationally. Most students are of White British heritage. The standards of students entering the school are above average. The school was awarded specialist technology college status in September 1994. It achieved leading edge status in September 2002 and became a training school in September 2004.

## 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 and improving school which is popular with students and their parents. The school experienced significant staff changes in recent years and standards declined. However, the secure and stable leadership of the principal and his senior leadership team have successfully guided the school through this period of turbulence so that standards are now higher than they were at the previous inspection. The school constantly strives to raise standards still further and sets itself challenging targets, which are almost always met. The number of students who achieve five GCSE grades A\* - C including mathematics and English is high. Students' personal development is good, although the school should increase the opportunities which students have for spiritual reflection. Students enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and feel safe at school. Behaviour is good, although some parents believe that it could be improved still further. Students are improving their social skills and many of them are making a significant contribution to the school through, for example, their participation in school teams and the school council. Teaching throughout the school is good but sometimes lessons do not challenge the most able students sufficiently. The curriculum has improved and is now good because it meets the needs of most learners, although the school recognises that the opportunities for students to participate in vocational education could be extended still further. The school provides good care, guidance and support. Students say how much they appreciate the support they receive from their teachers in helping them to improve their standards. The school's self-evaluation provides a largely accurate reflection of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school has good capacity to improve still further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the sixth form as satisfactory, rather than good. Recent changes to the management of the sixth form have provided a strong drive for improvement and there are early signs that standards are improving, for example through the current good quality of teaching and rigorous assessment practices. Achievement and standards are satisfactory because, although GCE AS level results improved significantly last year to above the national average, this improvement was not matched at GCE A level where students continue to underperform in a persistent minority of subjects. This weakness was also identified at the previous inspection. The school knows that its range of provision does not currently provide sufficient opportunities for students to follow vocational courses and is intending to broaden its curriculum. Class sizes in most subjects are small. There are plenty of opportunities for enrichment and for students to take additional responsibility, for example in mentoring younger students. Sixth form students make a good contribution to the overall life of the school and feel that their views are listened to. They are articulate and confident young people who are well equipped to progress to higher education or employment. Students are particularly appreciative of the support and encouragement they receive in choosing their higher education courses.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in the minority of GCE A level subjects in which students persistently underperform.
- Ensure that all lessons meet the needs of the most able learners.

- Improve the provision for students aged 14–19 in vocational education.
- Increase the opportunities for spiritual reflection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement and standards have improved this year and are now good. Students enter the school with attainment which is above average. They make good progress overall in Key Stage 3 but outstanding progress in mathematics. High standards are maintained in Key Stage 4 and the percentage of students who achieve at least five GCSE grades A\*– C including mathematics and English has improved to well above the national average. The school has an excellent system for setting challenging targets for individual students which is based on a detailed analysis of their prior attainment and ability. This has helped to encourage all students to achieve their potential and ensured that no groups underperform. The standards reached by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly impressive, based on their starting points. The school has consistently met or exceeded the challenging targets it sets as a specialist technology college. Most parents and students are pleased with standards in the school and in the sixth form.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy coming to school and many travel considerable distances to do so. They respect each other, their teachers and other adults and this is reflected in their good attendance and behaviour. Incidents of bullying and other significant misbehaviour are rare and the number of exclusions is low. Students confirm the school's view that it provides a safe and caring community in which they are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through regular sports activities and eating sensibly. Students are encouraged to contribute to the local community through events such as the Year 10 Challenge Week and take up the many leadership opportunities that the school provides. Students are well prepared for their future lives by their good progress in literacy, numeracy, and their development of enterprise skills. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They develop a clear sense of social awareness within a strong moral framework although there is scope for improving their spiritual development through the provision of more opportunities for reflection.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now good, confirming the school's view. The school has implemented a rigorous programme of monitoring and supporting teaching and the outcomes have been impressive. Teaching in English has shown substantial improvement and this has had a positive impact on students' progress in other subjects. Teaching in mathematics continues to be a strength of the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge

and use this to provide interesting and varied tasks for students in most lessons. There are significant strengths in most aspects teaching. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and provide well for the range of ability found in most classes. However, this is not always the case in planning to meet the needs of the most able students. Where teaching is good or better teachers move the lessons along at brisk pace and have high expectations of what students will achieve. In the minority of lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, the pace is more pedestrian and the work lacks sufficient challenge to enable students to make good progress. The school has excellent assessment procedures which are an outstanding example of how to track students' progress, ensure that they achieve well and set targets for improvement.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is good. Recent changes in lesson times and in the structure of the curriculum have helped to provide greater flexibility and choice. The range of options in Years 10 and 11 provides a good match with the needs, aspirations and capabilities of students, although opportunities to follow vocational courses could be extended still further. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is an appropriate range of courses for the few students in school who need alternative curriculum provision. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and is valued by students. The school has a good range of enrichment activities which help to broaden students' horizons and participation in extra curricular and sporting activities is high, despite the long journeys that many students make to and from school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and contributes positively to students' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Links with external agencies are very effective, particularly with primary schools, and the support for students joining the school is extremely good. Academic guidance is very strong and students are well advised about different course and career opportunities. Careful attention is paid to health and safety issues and child protection. Teachers know students very well and play a significant role in supporting them from day to day, although sometimes the use of morning tutorial time is not as effective as it could be. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the well-established procedures, commitment and expertise of the staff involved with their care and support.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The effective leadership of the principal and his senior leadership team has enabled the school to recover from a brief period when standards declined and emerge with standards higher than they were at the previous inspection. The principal's leadership style enables staff to create

and manage change that is well matched to the school's priorities. The school's rigorous cycle of self-evaluation, monitoring and review results in a consensus about what these priorities should be and the targets which should be used to measure progress towards achieving them. Changes to the curriculum, assessment procedures and performance management have all had a positive impact on standards. Good management at all levels ensures an appropriate focus on raising achievement through effective learning and as a result, teaching has improved. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school. They provide challenge to the school when areas of underperformance are identified, and ensure that appropriate strategies are implemented to promote improvement. The value for money provided by the school is satisfactory because the allocation of resources to the sixth form has not yet resulted in consistently good standards. The additional funds received by the school to develop external partnerships and to enhance its specialist status are used well.

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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	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?	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
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

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	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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	3	
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	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Sawtry Community College, Sawtry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 5TQ

I would like to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We met and talked with many of you during our two days at the school, watched as many lessons as we could and looked at the quality of your work. We also received more than five hundred responses to our questionnaire for parents and carers. Please pass on our thanks to them for taking the trouble to reply.

I am sure you will be delighted to know that we think Sawtry Community College is a good school. There is a real sense of people helping each other and you work hard. This means that standards in the school have improved since we last inspected it. We were pleased to see that the school encourages you to adopt healthy lifestyles and that so many of you participate in school sports teams. You told us how much you appreciate the quality of teaching and we could understand why you enjoy your lessons so much. Your parents have very high expectations of the school and although most of them feel that the school meets their expectations, a minority think that the behaviour of students could be improved still further.

We identified four things that the school could do to help it improve further.

- Improve standards in the minority of GCE A level subjects in which students persistently underperform.
- Ensure that all lessons meet the needs of the most able learners.
- Improve the provision for students aged 14-19 in vocational education.
- Increase the opportunities for spiritual reflection.

Keep up the good work, and thanks once again for your help.

Lindsay Hebditch HMI