

Comberton Village College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110900
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310460
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Handley
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Munday
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	West Street Comberton Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB23 7DU
Telephone number	01223 262503
Fax number	01223 264116

Age group	11–16
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Inspection number	310460

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

The college serves a relatively prosperous rural catchment area to the west of Cambridge. It has Sports College status and additional specialisms in languages and vocational education; in addition, the college is a Training School and a Leading Edge School and embraces a wide range of educational initiatives. Although the pupil profile has changed slightly in recent years, the vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average. The college has recently opened an on-site centre for students with Asperger's Syndrome in collaboration with the local authority.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement in 2007, the college's evaluation of teaching and learning, and its strategies for strengthening provision, including curriculum developments. Inspectors collected evidence from lesson observations, assessment data, documentation and meetings with key staff, the chair of governors and students. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Comberton Village College is an outstanding school. When it was last inspected it was also judged to be outstandingly effective, with very good provision and very good achievement. However, the college's commitment to continuous improvement has ensured that all aspects of its work have strengthened. The students' achievement and their personal development are outstanding.

The college's success in sustaining and further raising standards reflects its outstanding leadership and management. The principal, senior leaders and governors have a clear vision for improvement based on high achievement for all. They have created a climate of high aspiration, mutual support and critical self-evaluation. The relentless pursuit of excellence is based on sharply focused development planning and a strong tradition of research, training and self-review. The college successfully identifies the needs of the wide range of students and is quick to identify initiatives that will strengthen its provision and better meet these needs. Its specialisms, particularly Sports as the longest established, have been important drivers for improvement and have contributed significantly to raising standards and developing the college's wider impact. The staff, 13 of whom are advanced skills teachers, are the college's greatest resource: they provide outstanding teaching; excellent care, guidance and support for students; and are outward-looking in seeking improvement and in the wider contribution that they make through the college's many different partnerships. These strong partnerships at local, county, national and even international levels make a very positive contribution to the college's development and the outcomes for students.

Although the college has a comprehensive intake, students start secondary school with attainment that is above average overall. They build on their good starting points by making excellent progress as they move through the college. By Year 9 and the end of Year 11, standards are exceptionally high and achievement is outstanding. Exceptional standards have been sustained since the last inspection. Over one third of all GCSEs recorded in the most recent examinations in 2007 were A or A* grades. However, it is not only the most gifted and talented students who excel. The college's strongly inclusive approach ensures that students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make outstanding progress. All students have achieved at least five or more qualifications at GCSE level in recent years. Assessment information is used rigorously to track the progress of students and to direct necessary support. Target-setting for the college and for individual students is based on secure procedures and successfully sets challenging goals in order to raise standards. The college reached and surpassed its specialist college targets in 2007.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding students are excellent. The college provides a safe and supportive environment and is attentive to all aspects of students' health and well-being. Staff work hard to integrate all students fully into the life of the college and have achieved some remarkable successes with individual students. The students feel safe and are confident that the college listens to their views and acts in response to their concerns. In general, behaviour is excellent and students have positive attitudes to learning. They are courteous, show consideration for others and present themselves as responsible young people who are well prepared for the next stage of education and adult life. Students understand the importance of a healthy diet and respond positively to the college's excellent promotion of healthy lifestyles. Participation rates in the vast range of extra-curricular activities are impressive, with three quarters of students attending out-of-school sports clubs.

Excellent transition arrangements ensure that students make a seamless transfer from primary schools and are able to settle quickly. These well-established procedures, combined with an exceptional range of enrichment opportunities, mean that students are able to thrive socially as well as academically. Their personal development, including social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, is outstanding. Students are given many opportunities to assume responsibility and to develop their leadership skills within and beyond the college community. Many are acutely aware of their role as global citizens. The elected College Council and 'Pupil Learning Group' take their responsibilities seriously and are able to influence the work of the college, for example with recent improvements to food and with recycling initiatives.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding because the curriculum is excellent and so many lessons are consistently good or outstanding. The climate for learning is excellent and relationships between adults and students are very good. Students are keen to participate and enjoy their learning. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan interesting and challenging work, using a good variety of activities. Assessment is rigorous. Teachers have very high expectations; they set clear targets for students and review their progress regularly so that students have a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve. The college has well-established procedures for evaluating teaching and strengthening provision through high quality training and support. The work of groups such as the 'teaching and learning group' has been instrumental in the successful implementation of new approaches and the continuous improvement in classroom practice.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a good range of opportunities for students. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides suitable options for students of all abilities, including work-related learning and vocational courses. Nonetheless, the college recognises the need to develop a wider range of courses and options to better meet the individual needs of students. An outstanding range of events, trips and extra-curricular activities, including an impressive number of sporting, musical and drama clubs, complements the curriculum and broadens students' experiences. The citizenship programme, highlighted as an area for improvement at the last inspection, is now a strength.

Excellent leadership at all levels ensures that the college has outstanding capacity to improve. It is constantly seeking ways to increase its effectiveness and is careful to engage all staff in this process. Procedures for monitoring the college's performance and evaluating its progress are systematic and rigorous, and increasingly involve students. Although a few parental questionnaire returns were critical of aspects of the college's provision, parents' responses were overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of the way that the college has supported their children. One summed up the views of many others in writing, 'I am not the least surprised by the college's enviable status and reputation. It is what one would like all state schools to be.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop new courses and options, including vocational provision and personalised learning programmes, that meet the individual learning needs, aptitudes and aspirations of all students.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 school 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	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
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 school'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 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

10 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Comberton Village College, Comberton, Cambridge. CB23 7DU

Thank you for the positive contribution that you made to our recent inspection. We were impressed by your friendly welcome and the mature and sensible way that you spoke with us. Your views, and those of your parents, were very helpful in confirming what staff told us about the college. We agree that Comberton Village College is an outstanding school.

We were particularly impressed with:

- the exceptional standards of your work and the excellent progress that you make in lessons and over time
- your excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning
- the high quality of teaching and the way that the college is constantly seeking to improve it
- the huge range of opportunities, including extra-curricular activities, that you participate in
- the positive and wide ranging contributions that you make to the college and the wider community
- the outstanding quality and effectiveness of the college's leadership at all levels.

You and your parents raised some issues that I have discussed with the college, but the one area that the college recognises as a priority for improvement is linked with the curriculum. It is not easy to provide options that meet the individual learning needs and aptitudes of all students, but the college is already developing new courses and more individualised learning programmes, including new vocational options in Key Stage 4. This remains an area for improvement.

We were very impressed with the way that so many of you take responsibility for your own learning and for the well-being of others in your own college community and beyond. We recognise that you are given some say in the way that the college makes improvements and it is important that you continue to play your part.

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector