

# St Luke's Science and Sports College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113550
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	311313
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steffi Penny 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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	942
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Buswell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Terry Hammond
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Harts Lane Exeter EX1 3RD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 204600
<b>Fax number</b>	01392 204601

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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

The number of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and several students have complex special needs. There is a greater proportion of students with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties than found nationally. Highly specialist provision for learners with physical difficulties is provided in the college's Brunel Centre. Whilst students come from a broad range of backgrounds, overall their socio-economic circumstances are comparatively disadvantaged. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.

In September 2005 the college admitted Year 7 students for the first time as part of the reorganisation of education in Exeter. Since the last inspection it has grown from a 720 pupil school to a 940 specialist college. In January 2006 after a series of complicated delays from the planned move date of September 2005, the college moved to a new building one mile away from the previous buildings. Consequently, major disruption was caused to the learning programme and students spent one term in overcrowded and inadequate conditions on the former site.

The college was granted dual specialist status for science and sports in September 2005 and at the same time it successfully applied to become the hub site for physical education and sport in Exeter, hosting the School Sport Partnership.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Outstanding care, guidance and support are at the heart of the inclusive nature of this good college. This work results in the exemplary personal development and well-being of students, representing a significant improvement since the last inspection. Most parents and students recognise this. One typical parent commented, 'The college is brilliant! All the staff are friendly and know what they are doing.'

There are very good relationships between students and with teachers. Students respond well to the challenges set for them and most say that they enjoy their learning. The impact of the 'Fit to Succeed' philosophy of the college continues to be identified as outstanding practice in reducing childhood obesity and helping ensure the appropriate physical development of students. The efforts of the college to integrate students with complex needs are highly successful. As a result, these students are fully included in the life of the college and are highly valued members of the community.

The curriculum is highly inclusive because courses and programmes are designed specifically to cater for groups of students with different needs. The college's specialist status has helped it to provide an extremely good range of courses at Key Stage 4, with well advanced plans for even further developments. In particular, programmes and courses run by the college and through external agencies very effectively support the personal development and achievement of potentially disaffected youngsters and those with designated behavioural, social or emotional difficulties. These have raised students' aspirations and improved their motivation, confidence, attendance and social skills. The consequence is that the vast majority of students are well prepared for their future lives.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and in most classes they use a good variety of styles to engage students effectively, although not enough emphasis is placed on independent working. Generally, lessons are well managed and proceed at a good pace but in a few the challenge is not great enough and the pace slackens. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed so that they help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make the same good progress as their peers.

The college, through its senior leadership team and governance, is well aware of strengths and relative weaknesses in teaching and learning in different subjects. The strategies to tackle areas of relative weakness are well established and are already leading to improvements in the standards and achievement of the students. The food that the college provides is scrumptious as well as being healthy and nutritious. This was carefully planned in advance of the contract being awarded and the catering staff are rightly proud of their products, which students 'lap up'. The vast majority of parents say that they are happy and confident in all that the college does. A few feel that communication with them should be improved.

Governance is outstanding because governors not only know the college exceedingly well but because they have supported it with steadfastness through helping it to develop creatively whilst providing stability and security for the students.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that all teachers are using a wide range of teaching styles and in particular provide more opportunities for independent working.

- Increase the proportion of good and better lessons by making sure that all lessons are challenging and proceed at a good pace.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards overall have shown an upward trend over the last three years. In summer 2007 performance at GCSE and in the end of Key Stage 3 tests, although below the national average, represented satisfactory progress for these students given their below average standards on entry to the college. Targets were achieved or exceeded in most cases with some outstanding results in communication studies and applied science. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades including English and mathematics rose.

Improvement has continued so that students currently achieve well, especially in English and science. In recent years, progress in mathematics has been unsatisfactory but through good support of staff and the department's hard work, standards are now equivalent to those in English and science. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, because of the very good care and guidance they receive.

The college thoroughly tracks and analyses students' performance and has good systems in place to support students who are not achieving as well they should. It also provides a good range of alternative courses more suited to some students' individual learning needs. Although this may adversely affect the overall GCSE A\*- G figures, these students obtain qualifications and skills that enable them to enter the world of work or further training successfully.

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

### **Grade: 1**

A student aptly declared, 'The best thing about this St Luke's is the people, not the buildings.'

The college can be justifiably proud of the maturity and eagerness to learn exhibited by all the youngsters. Under a regime nurtured by caring and committed staff and driven by the wide-ranging involvement of student councils, the personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students have thrown themselves highly successfully into healthy living, prompted by the direct challenge from the college to exercise, eat healthily and stay safe. They care for each other and for people in the wider community; there is exemplary communication and understanding between the different age groups. This is in part thanks to some decidedly old fashioned 'innovations' such as house captains, college blazers and singing in assemblies as well as other exciting ideas such as student participation in staff interviews, sports leadership opportunities and student mentors. These initiatives, along with many others including charitable events, are usually decided in student councils. All these ideas are fully endorsed by the students themselves who have signalled their approval by voting with their feet by joining in so well.

Participation in extra-curricular activities is extremely high and since the previous inspection behaviour, attitudes and punctuality have improved dramatically. Attendance is now up to national standards, with nearly all students thoroughly enjoying and benefiting from their time at college. Provision for information and communication technology develops skills that will be useful in later life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

In all years teaching and learning are good overall, enabling students to make good progress. This partly results from an extensive system of lesson monitoring where teachers are observed regularly and feedback leads to identified professional development and in some cases coaching. This system is complemented by the senior team completing learning walks. These are well documented and give good information on learning successes in the college. Specialist status has been used well in identifying good practice and sharing between specific departments; for example, the science department has been offering support to history. There is good use of teaching assistants, who support specific students who have difficulties so that they are able to achieve as well as their peers. In Year 7, particularly strong additional support allows students to make progress where they have specific learning problems. This enables them to make good progress in all their subjects. Teachers track the achievement of their students well and most students know their levels and grades and how to improve.

Students enjoy their learning enormously and this contributes to the good progress they make in class. In most of the lessons observed there was a range of teaching styles adopted, but students do not have enough opportunities to work independently. Most lessons are well organised and have a brisk pace, and targets are set that challenge most students. Occasionally, the work is not challenging enough and the pace of learning drops.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. The college is ahead of the game in implementing Key Stage 4 pathways for learning. It is taking full advantage of co-operating with local partners, where the college has been proactive in working with the whole range of other agencies in the locality. They have taken advantage of the specialist status in many ways, particularly developing specific focus on fitness and linking that to improving achievement. The Key Stage 4 pathways offer students relevant and constructive routes into further study or employment, and students value the good option choices they are given and the well supported process of choice. There is improving achievement across subjects in this key stage with some opportunities for accelerated learning, and students with special needs achieve as well as others. They are well integrated into the college and have an appropriate and relevant choice of subjects offered. An increasing range of extended services enriches the curriculum and complements student learning. Students develop enterprise skills and work-related learning through elements of these programmes.

In Key Stage 3 the national strategies have been well consolidated, so that students develop self-confidence and skills so that they are well prepared for the next stages of their education. In particular, they have good opportunities to improve their own personal development through guided programmes of individual study. Personalised learning is particularly evident in this stage and students say they feel that they have their own needs met well.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the curriculum is responsive to local needs. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported by students, and in some cases supported by high quality external coaches.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The college is widely recognised for its inclusiveness and caring approach. Staff understand the range of needs that students bring to college and adapt their support methods and approach consistently. The vast majority of students have a very clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, both through the teaching and through the excellent house tutor system. This is reinforced by a comprehensive academic mentoring system.

The college has worked extremely hard to provide a broad and flexible range of courses at Key Stage 4 that interest and encourage even the most reluctant students. Students are widely consulted before changes are made to college structures. The systems to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the students are exemplary. Students help to make the college a pleasant well cared for environment. Students are advised and guided at every stage of their education. The mixed age tutor groups not only provide a 'family' feel but younger and older students can easily consult each other in a non-threatening atmosphere. Students say that they are given very good advice and are very involved in planning the next stage of their education. The college has established outstanding links with local schools and colleges that make the movement between the different establishments very comfortable and smooth.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

There are some outstanding elements of leadership and management, which are good overall. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and cohesive nature of the senior leadership team have provided inspirational direction for the college. The shared drive for improvement has led to the recent success in raising achievement and standards across the college and to the outstanding personal development of students. It has done this by enabling subject leaders to develop their roles and to take responsibility for standards in their areas. The inventive use of its specialist status and partnerships is also helping to raise the life chances for other children who do not attend St Luke's.

College development planning and self-evaluation processes are good. They are comprehensive and forward looking and show a clear and realistic understanding of the college's strengths and relative weaknesses. The college is well aware that more needs to be done on creating a more consistent approach to the monitoring of learning in lessons and the sharing of good and better practice. A few parents felt that the college did not listen to them and their children. They also wanted more immediate access to staff. Inspection evidence and the vast majority of parents found that the college seeks the views of all its users and partners regularly; it evaluates and acts upon this information by incorporating ideas into the college development planning. Sometimes they are able to implement suggestions immediately and they let stakeholders know that they have done this, for example through the Parents' Group, newsletters or its website.

Governance is exemplary. Governors fulfil their roles exceedingly well, supporting the college highly effectively in its development whilst also providing stability. In particular, they have set up new communication arrangements to ensure that when parents have concerns about their child they are directed to the most suitable member of staff. This change has resulted in some

of the parental concerns over communication with them, because the college has not so far informed parents and carers clearly enough about the revised procedures.



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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
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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
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	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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
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
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	2
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

21 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St Luke's Science and Sports, Exeter, EX1 3RD

- Thank you for the warm welcome you all gave us when we inspected your college. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to your teachers and other staff and visiting lessons. Many of you, and most of your parents, told us how the good relationships between you and the staff mean that you greatly enjoy being at St Luke's and feel, rightly, that you are progressing well.
- You told us that your college provided a good education. We fully agree with this view. The senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Particularly impressive are:
  - the way the college is led by senior staff and the commitment of all its staff
  - the courses and other activities that the college provides to ensure that you have good opportunities to make good progress academically and outstanding progress in your personal and social skills
  - the way the college looks after you, and the support it provides for those students who experience difficulties
  - your attitude to learning and healthy living; it was wonderful to see you working so hard on the sports field and in your dance studio
  - the way you treat each other and visitors with respect, especially when you are in the atrium.

To make your college even better we have recommended that it:

- raises achievement by ensuring that all teachers are using a wide range of teaching styles and in particular that they are providing more opportunities for independent working
- increases the proportion of good and better lessons by making sure that all lessons are challenging and proceed at a good pace.

Perhaps you can think of ways to help them do this?

The senior staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the college and have plans well in hand to do it. We believe that if you behave well, attend regularly and work hard in lessons then standards will rise further.

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable and we wish you every success for the future.

Steffi Penny Her Majesty's Inspector