

Ivanhoe College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120251
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313565
Inspection date	21 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	883
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Mabey
Headteacher	Alan Hutchingson
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2004
School address	North Street Ashby-de-la-Zouch LE65 1HX
Telephone number	01530 412756
Fax number	01530 412146

Age group	11–14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The overall effectiveness of the school was investigated together with the following issues: achievement and standards, particularly of middle attaining students; the quality of teaching and learning, and how well challenging targets are used to ensure effective support and guidance. Evidence was gathered by reviewing documentation; interviewing staff, parents, governors and pupils; observing lessons and by looking at pupil's work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its Self Evaluation Form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The college is a below average sized secondary school but has a large intake into each of Years 7 to 9. The college serves the Ashby de la Zouch area of Leicestershire. Deprivation levels are lower than average. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage with just a small number from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. On entry to the college, attainment is broadly average. The college has a slightly below average proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but a higher than usual percentage have a statement of special educational needs.

The college gained technology specialist status in 2006.

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 and lives up to the statement on its website that it 'has a great deal to be proud of'. The overwhelming majority of parents, in responding through the inspection questionnaires, expressed unreserved support for the school.

Students progress well as the result of good teaching, effective support and guidance, and a curriculum that is exceptionally well adapted to this age group. Test results in English, mathematics and science are consistently above the national average as is the attainment in other subjects across the curriculum. Higher attaining students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress particularly well but middle-attaining students make satisfactory progress. Students' attitudes to learning are good and this reflects the positive relationships they enjoy with their peers and teachers. These relationships are enhanced by good strategies to involve students positively in the college and broader community. For instance, the student council is highly valued and students speak warmly of the approachability of their principal. Not surprisingly, students enjoy college and this largely explains the overall good behaviour and attendance. The college is taking effective steps to improve the attitudes of a small minority of students who occasionally do not concentrate in lessons. Students eat very healthily and take regular exercise through an exceptionally varied curriculum that includes a wide variety of sporting activities. Moral, social, spiritual and cultural development is good. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively when it does occur, so that students feel very safe and secure in college. Students develop the skills needed to ensure they are well prepared to take advantage of opportunities available in the next stage of their education.

The curriculum provided for the students is a real strength. The college has a strong impact on the students' personal development and well-being and deserves the awards received for provision in sports, the arts and for being healthy. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities and a variety of trips that students readily take part in. For example, students use the opportunity to make use of the music provision and about a third of the school enthusiastically take part in the annual musical production. The college has used its specialist technology status to work effectively with local primary schools and this has raised the students' attainment on entry, particularly in technology. The college prepares Year 9 students well for the curriculum in Key Stage 4. Work-related learning is available to meet the needs of a small minority of students and more is on the way through collaboration with the local schools and further education colleges. A particular noteworthy feature is the use of links between different subjects, for example writing in English using history topics.

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use information and communication technology (ICT) well to enhance the students' engagement in lessons. Students are enthusiastic about the majority of lessons they experience because they are actively involved. Where teaching and learning are most effective, lessons meet the needs of students of all abilities. When concepts are revisited they are presented in a fresh context and teachers make it abundantly clear how they relate to their current targets. Students also have opportunities to assess their own and others' work. This engages students and gives them a sense of responsibility for their learning. Learning support assistants are used effectively to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The progress made by middle attaining students is less because work is not always matched to their needs; for instance too much work covered previously in primary schools is repeated unnecessarily.

The college is highly regarded in the local community for the care and support it gives to students. The procedures for safeguarding students are in place and meet all the necessary statutory requirements. Form tutors provide a continuity of pastoral care and students are well cared for and have confidence in all the staff to address any concerns that they may have. The college works effectively with external agencies, such as the youth service. This comprehensive provision is instrumental in ensuring the good progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college informs parents well about their children's progress. While students know their academic targets, there is variability across departments in informing students how to achieve them. Arrangements for tracking the progress of students are in place; however, these differ across the separate college departments and, as a result, there are inconsistencies in the monitoring of students' progress. There has been insufficient review of progress towards targets associated with good achievement for middle attaining students.

Leadership and management are good. A distinctive feature of the school is the amount of autonomy given to departments. This has resulted in highly committed staff, who feel valued and give a great deal to the college. The school now has significant strengths at head of department level and has recognised the potential of younger staff to take on important whole-school roles, for instance in leading on the further development of tracking and in ensuring key literacy skills are promoted. The school's monitoring and evaluation have effectively identified strengths and weaknesses. A down side to the high level of departmental autonomy is that consistent whole-college approaches have been slow to develop. For instance, only certain departments are currently developing effective approaches to peer and self-assessment. Crucially, the college's leadership has recognised that middle-attaining students do less well because in the past the school has only responded with additional support when students are making less than satisfactory progress. The use of data is improving and the college is beginning to set and measure success in achieving challenging targets.

The college is making good progress in developing its specialist technology status, particularly with regard to improving the curriculum and enhancing teaching through the effective use of (ICT). The work of governors has been important in ensuring the success of this initiative. Governors effectively hold the school to account but the lack of measurable targets related to student achievement restricts their contribution. The college manages resources well and gives good value for money. A significant minority of parents and carers think the school could do more to listen to their views. However, the record of accomplishment and the steps the school is taking to bring about greater consistency indicate a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of data so challenging targets are used more consistently, for instance in monitoring activity and ensuring that middle-attaining students make good progress.
- Improve learning by matching lessons to students' needs and reviewing more regularly their progress towards individual targets.
- Develop the good initiatives in individual departments more quickly into consistent whole-school practice.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 February 2008

Inspection of Ivanhoe College, Ashby de la Zouch LE65 1HX

Dear Students

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your college recently. I would particularly like to thank the students we interviewed for their extremely perceptive comments about the college.

We agreed with you that your school is good. A major strength is the wide range of opportunities you have to undertake. Another strength is the different sporting and arts-related activities. We think the school does well in ensuring a smooth journey between primary and upper schools. The school involves you well in decision-making through your student council and you particularly value the willingness of your Principal to listen to your views. You enjoy the majority of lessons because teachers actively involve you in learning. You are well cared for and receive effective support and guidance. This effective provision results in good progress and above average results.

Although the vast majority of you behave very well, we agreed with the comments you made about the attitudes of a small minority. The school is successfully addressing this and we think that our suggestions on how the school can improve further will help also. We have suggested that the school sets more consistently challenging targets and monitors these even more carefully. This will ensure that middle-attaining students will achieve as well as high-attaining students, and also improve the attainment of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We have suggested that all lessons should focus more on your individual targets and meet your learning needs more effectively. You can help by being prepared to share your perceptive views with the adults in your college. We think the college is eager to listen and will act in response to what you have to say.

Good luck for the future and I hope your musical production goes well.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector