

Arnold Hill School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122847
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314421
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Martin HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
College	1678
6th form	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Jennifer Cole
Headteacher	Mr Robin Fugill
Date of previous college inspection	6 July 2004
College address	Gedling Road Arnold Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG5 6NZ
Telephone number	0115 9554804
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the college

The school serves a wide geographical area of the county to the north west of the city of Nottingham. Eligibility for free school meals is below average as are indications of social and economic disadvantage, although there are significantly disadvantaged wards within the area. A smaller proportion of students than average is from ethnic minority backgrounds or has English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion with statements. The school has significantly high numbers of students diagnosed in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

The school has specialist status for technology and has recently been successfully re-designated.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 3

Arnold Hill School and Technology College offers a satisfactory standard of education. There are, however some strong areas of provision and indications that outcomes for students are improving, particularly test outcomes at the end of Year 9. The impact of specialist technology status has had a significant impact on the curriculum offered, improvements to buildings and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and community outreach work.

Until recently the standards attained by students, although a little above average, were not as high as they should have been. As students enter the school with attainment that is above the national average, this means that progress is only satisfactory as they move through the school. However, progress has improved at Key Stage 3; in 2007, it was at least at expected levels, and better in English. At Key Stage 4, despite significant increases in the proportion gaining 5 A*-C grades, overall scores attained by all students show weak progress. The progress made by students who enter the school with lower than average attainment is weak. Too many students leave school without at least one accredited GCSE or equivalent grade. Achievement overall is only satisfactory.

The reason for this progress is the satisfactory but inconsistent provision made by the school. Teaching is too variable and insufficiently well matched to the needs of all students. Whilst there is much good teaching in the school, the expectations for all classroom practice have not been set until recently. Although monitored effectively, teaching has improved insufficiently across the school. Recent revisions to the curriculum have enabled the school more successfully to meet the needs of all students, but these changes are yet to impact on GCSE performance. The tracking of students' progress and their involvement in setting targets is now more effective in identifying underperformance. However, some students are unaware of the steps that they need to take in order to improve.

Because of these gaps in provision, standards are not rising quickly enough in some subjects and for some groups of students. Although many clearly enjoy school and attend regularly, the attitudes shown by a minority are poor in some lessons. Although behaviour around the site was good, too much poor behaviour is evident in lessons. Although a small minority of students are engaged in disruptive behaviour, both parents and students believe that it has an adverse effect on the learning of many. Overall, personal development is satisfactory due to the effectiveness of day-to-day care, support and guidance. There are particular strengths in putting into practice their understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. The contribution that the school makes to the wider community and the preparation of students for their future working lives and education are good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders at senior and other levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Recently improved use of data and tracking systems are helping staff to identify underperformance and a range of appropriate interventions is in place. There is evidence, through recent assessments, of further improvement in achievement, but this is unconfirmed by improved external examinations and test results. Governors support managers well. Issues from the last inspection have improved and the school has a good capacity to improve still further due to recent improvements in the use of data, student tracking and the curriculum.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form provision is satisfactory with a satisfactory capacity to improve. After a dip over the last two years, numbers have increased this year, with nearly half of Year 11 opting to stay on. The school offers a good range of A level courses and is building its vocational provision to meet students' demand.

The sixth form has a positive ethos in which students enjoy their studies and personal development is good. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities available, including sports leadership and Duke of Edinburgh award. Additionally, a number of sixth formers acts as mentors to younger students.

Student achievement is satisfactory but with significant variations between subjects. Examination results are broadly in line with the national average. This is due to satisfactory teaching and learning. There are pockets of good, lively teaching, but some remains unchallenging and too often teacher dominated.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Although there is good general support for progression to higher education and employment, there is inconsistency in the delivery of the tutorial programme and a lack of challenge in some of the activities.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Managers are aware of areas in need of improvement, in particular the need to put in place a more consistent and robust target setting and academic review system, as well as undertaking a rigorous evaluation of the overall quality of teaching and learning.

What the college should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of students whose attainment on entry is below average.
- Match teaching more consistently to all students' needs and interests in order to improve standards, enjoyment and attitudes to learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school having achieved standards at the end of their primary school education that are above the national average. By the time they take their exams at the end of Year 11 some students are not making expected levels of progress. This is particularly true of students who have lower levels of attainment on entry, many of them boys. The progress made by the end of Year 9 has until this year been poor. Students have then made satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, but insufficient for some to catch up to expected levels. Achievement is therefore only satisfactory.

In 2007, students have made satisfactory progress in the Year 9 tests and assessment information shows sustained progress in Year 10. Progress was significantly better than expectations in English, at expected levels in mathematics and science. Progress at Key Stage 4 was better at

5A*-C than the average score for all students. Students of lower prior attainment made significantly less progress than is expected.

The standards reached at Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with national averages in 2006. At Key Stage 4 in 2007 the school performed above the national average at 5A*-C, in line at 5A*-G but below expected levels in terms of the proportion of students achieving at least one pass or equivalent at GCSE.

Achievement is satisfactory in the sixth form but with significant variations between subjects. Standards are broadly in line with the national average. The progress that students make from their starting points is satisfactory.

The school is setting increasingly ambitious targets for future performance. It is providing much better information and analysis for students, parents and teaching staff. This is enabling staff to identify students who are underperforming in order to provide support and challenge where required, but has not yet made an impact on external tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most students enjoy school life, attend regularly and behave well. However, there is a small but significant minority whose behaviour and attitudes are not good enough, particularly in lessons where the level of challenge is inconsistent or poor.

Students feel safe in the school. They say that staff take prompt and effective action when bullying or racist incidents occur. Sixth formers provide good role models as mentors and are regularly involved in supporting younger or vulnerable students. Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Participation in sporting activities is good and students enjoy the good range of healthy snacks and meals available. They particularly appreciate the opportunity of 'tasters' to try out new dishes.

Students' community involvement is good. The school and year councils play an active part in school life. Members take their responsibilities seriously and appreciate that the school listens to their views. Students are prepared well for their future lives, through the school's specialist technology status provision and good skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is inconsistency evident across the curriculum. Subject review by senior staff and self-evaluation at department level go some way to address this variation in quality and are fundamental to further improvement.

Teachers show good subject knowledge and planning is usually good. ICT is used well and facilities are good. Most lessons benefit from the good rapport between teachers and students. The best lessons challenge students through direct questioning that probes and extends their understanding. In less effective lessons, progress is not good due to a lack of variety of interesting activities to engage learners with different learning needs. In a few lessons there is good evidence of the effective use of self and peer assessment, but marking is variable in quality and frequency and does not always suggest targets for improvement. There are insufficient opportunities for learners to develop independent learning skills. Behaviour management is generally good and follows the school 'Behaviour for Learning' framework, but there is some deliberate disruption in a minority of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and gives pupils a range of learning opportunities that they enjoy. There is good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT and all groups of students have the opportunity to study these subjects at a suitable level.

The school increasingly meets the needs of students with learning or behavioural difficulties through a bespoke package of college and extended work placement and for those with gifts and talents there are AS level courses available in Year 11. At Key Stage 4 students can freely choose from a range of academic and vocational subjects and take a double award in design technology. However, the steps taken to revise and improve the curriculum are not fully embedded and therefore not yet having an impact on standards.

The curriculum helps pupils to be safe and healthy through the new personal development curriculum, delivered by tutors. There is a good take up of opportunities for enrichment that promote sporting, academic and personal development. The flourishing Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is particularly popular. This extended experience adds to pupils' good health, confidence and well-being and increases community involvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has a supportive and caring ethos. It is developing a good range of structures to support students' attendance, behaviour and progress as they move through the school. The impact of these initiatives leads to improvements, but much is relatively recent and not embedded. There is good support for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties or disabilities both in lessons and around the school. The school makes good use of advice and support from a wide range of external agencies.

Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements but not all staff regularly receive training about dealing with any concerns that students may discuss with them. Having risen in the last two years following the introduction of new procedures for managing behaviour, the number of exclusions is now falling. The school has good procedures in place to support students' re-integration into daily routines.

The school has established an effective system for tracking students' progress as they move through the school. However, there is some inconsistency in the use made of this information.

Students are not always sure of what they need to do to improve and reports to parents are inconsistent in providing clear guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Progress in addressing the issues identified for improvement in the previous inspection is satisfactory. Technology college status has made a strong impact in terms of resources and outreach provision, but only limited impact upon standards.

The strategic direction provided by the headteacher is good. He has established direction for the school and is committed to improving the achievement of students. He takes an active role in local initiatives, for example the development of diplomas in construction. The senior leadership team are working effectively in planning and implementing new developments. The use of target setting to raise achievement is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of middle managers are good. Middle managers monitor and evaluate teaching and learning accurately. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to guide teaching and learning and to improve progress. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory.

Financial planning linked to the school development plan is satisfactory, but curriculum planning and staffing costs are not analysed to prioritise and balance spending between the main school and sixth form. Expenditure on resources has improved since the last inspection, particularly that for ICT. Value for money is satisfactory.

Governance is good and statutory requirements are covered. The governing body is well informed and well placed to drive development and challenge performance. The capacity for further improvement is good.

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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	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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the college work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	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	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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?	3	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	3	
The effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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 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

22 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Arnold Hill School and Technology College, Nottingham, NG5 6NZ

I am writing to tell you what the inspection team found when we visited your school recently. Our discussions with you in meetings, in class and around school helped us to find out how well your school meets your needs.

We judged that your school was providing you with a satisfactory education. There were some particularly good points that we would like to share with you. You felt that teachers were helpful and that their care for your welfare was good and we agree. Older students recognised that opportunities to contribute to the wider community and the preparation for the world of work and next stages of education are good. You clearly enjoy the many activities available, and mention in particular the Duke of Edinburgh awards, sports, drama and music. The facilities available through specialist technology status are also making a real difference in the school, particularly the availability of ICT. We also found that the sixth form students were mature in their attitudes to their studies, set a good example to younger students and provided help through mentoring.

Some aspects of your school's work could improve. Although many of you achieve good test and examination results, not everyone reaches their full potential. This is particularly true of the students who have not achieved a pass at GCSE who should be able to do so. However, the curriculum is now matched more carefully to your needs and your progress is being more carefully tracked. Recent assessment indicates that this is making a difference. Most of you are well behaved, friendly and cooperative. However, a minority of students has a poor attitude to work and their behaviour disrupts the learning of others. Although some lessons are good and really engage you in active learning, some are not as good. These lessons are less well matched to all students' needs and this has an effect on your motivation to learn.

We have asked the school to make sure that you all make as much progress as possible. We have also asked that managers work hard to make all teaching as good as the best so that you can make good progress and enjoy your studies. You can all play your part by cooperating fully with the school's efforts to improve still further.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. On behalf of the inspection team I would like to wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Martin HMI