

Selston Arts and Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122857
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314424
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Simpson 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
College	777
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Dixon
Headteacher	Mrs D Stendall
Date of previous college inspection	11 May 2004
College address	Chapel Road Selston Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG16 6BW
Telephone number	01773 810321
Fax number	01773 510262

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the college

Selston is a smaller than average secondary school. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and/or who do not have English as a first language are well below average. The percentage of the college's students who have learning difficulties and disabilities is well above the national average. The College was renamed in September 2006 when it became a specialist arts college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 3

Selston Arts and Community College accurately judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. Amongst its strengths is the rigorous monitoring of standards, which is beginning to have an impact on overcoming a legacy of underachievement. Through the college's hard work a significantly higher proportion of students attained five or more good GCSE grades in this summer's examinations. The standards observed during the inspection were broadly in line with national averages although the college knows that it has to improve attainment in English, mathematics and science and ensure that more able students are sufficiently challenged to fulfil their potential. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where the teaching is most effective, the focus is upon students demonstrating their learning, showing independence, initiative and the capacity to reflect on their work. While monitoring and thoughtfully planned professional development is improving teaching, too much still remains where the pace is either too slow to stretch students or sometimes too fast for them to consolidate and demonstrate their learning.

The college has benefited from specialist arts status and met its first year's targets. Students are very positive about the additional opportunities this has provided them, such as the opportunities to perform in the community, the broadening of their curriculum and the quality of the college environment, including improved information and communication technology (ICT). The college has also strengthened community links, for example, the transition of pupils from local primary schools has improved. The college draws on a wide range of partners to broaden the curriculum and this is contributing to students' positive attitudes and improved attainment in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum meets the needs of students well and the college has appropriate plans to improve provision further in Years 7 to 9.

The students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They move around the college sensibly and respond positively when given demanding work to do. Although a significant minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, the inspectors saw little that was untoward and these incidents were invariably the result of teaching that did not sufficiently engage students in their studies. In the many lessons observed inspectors saw good relationships between students and adults, and students co-operating with one another productively. Care, guidance and support are also satisfactory, with significant strengths in safeguarding procedures and academic monitoring which is beginning to overcome previous underachievement.

Leadership and management are increasingly focused on raising standards and setting more ambitious targets for students. Improvements to the college's procedures for tracking student progress are in their infancy, but staff are able to describe clearly how the emerging systems are helping them to look more critically at information and act promptly where underachievement is identified. The headteacher has high aspirations for the college community and has not been afraid to challenge underperformance. Her extended leadership team is playing a significant role in increasing the accountability of middle managers for attainment and the quality of learning. In turn, middle managers show an understanding of the college's monitoring procedures and an appreciation of how they will be able to further develop their role as more data on the students' progress is available. Governors make a good contribution to the college, know what its priorities are and are not afraid to ask critical questions in pursuit of better standards. Given recent developments and improvements in provision and attainment, the college is demonstrating good capacity to improve.

What the college should do to improve further

- Raise attainment and achievement particularly for the more able and, for all, in English, mathematics and science
- Improve the quality of the students' 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

After a period of underachievement, students are now making satisfactory progress and are attaining results in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations that are close to what is expected of them. The standards reached by Year 9 in 2007 were below average; nevertheless, this represents satisfactory achievement for these students, given their starting points in Year 7. In GCSE examinations, the number of students gaining 5 or more A* to C grades improved considerably in 2007 and was much closer to the national average. The college recognises that, within this overall improvement, results in English and mathematics were not good enough and it is taking action in order to bring about rapid improvement in these subjects. The systems for tracking progress helpfully enable the college to check on the progress of different groups of students. Because of this, the college has accurately identified the underperformance of some higher attaining students and issues of students' attainment in science and is taking appropriate action. The college sets targets for the minimum overall performance expected for each student and gives individuals a target to which they could aspire. These targets are helping to motivate both staff and students and are helping to maintain students' satisfactory overall achievement. The college did not meet all its targets in 2007 but, in its quest to raise standards further, has set more, and challenging, targets for the coming year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students generally enjoy coming to college and, when lessons are stimulating and challenging, they enjoy their learning. Attendance has improved, reflecting an improvement in the range and relevance of courses and activities the college provides. Students generally behave sensibly, but can become restless when lessons do not interest or engage them. Overall relationships are courteous and friendly, contributing to a happy 'feel' to the college community. Students feel safe and secure in college and appreciate the individual support and help they receive. They are able to explain how they should adopt healthy lifestyles, but not all yet follow the guidance they have been given. However, they do talk enthusiastically about the many ways in which they can take physical exercise within PE lessons and beyond in other activities. Through the work of the school council and other groups, students make a sound contribution to the college and its wider communities. Satisfactory standards in basic skills and improving use of new technologies contribute to adequately preparing students for when they transfer to the world of work. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Effective work since the previous inspection has improved students' awareness of the opportunities and challenges that stem from living in a multi-cultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most students have reasonable or better attitudes to learning and behaviour, and teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teaching that provides challenge for all and allows opportunity for students to work collaboratively engages the students effectively. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is not well matched to the students' needs and therefore does not enable them to make the progress they could. In addition, lessons are often dominated by the teacher and do not enable students to discuss or evaluate their own work or that of their peers. Questioning techniques used by teachers do not always allow for extended answers from students that might explore the depth of their understanding. However, in a good Year 9 lesson the teacher's questioning helped the students to develop their analytical skills through frequently providing opportunities for them to consider possible interpretations of *Of Mice and Men*.

The college has made much effort in recent years to improve the quality of teaching and has instigated rigorous monitoring. This has resulted in professional development focused on improving teaching and learning and tailored to individual teachers' needs, which uses both support within college and partners from outside the college. The impact of this is emerging gradually; for example, the use of data about students' progress is beginning to be used to inform planning and learning objectives and learning outcomes are becoming established. The college has as a priority the improvement of assessment so that students understand the next steps they need to take in order to do better. The provision for gifted and talented students is developing satisfactorily.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum and other activities is good. All students follow a broad and balanced curriculum that more than meets statutory requirements. In Key Stage 3, there is useful additional support for those students who need to develop basic skills. The college has developed the curriculum well since the previous inspection and changes in curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 are beginning to have an impact on improving student achievement. The college works extensively with other partners and providers to offer a range of alternative curriculum provision at Key Stage 4. These include vocational courses such as horticulture and engineering, which provide appropriate vocational opportunities for students of all abilities. The college helpfully seeks feedback from employers and students involved in those courses, wherein elements of work related learning help to prepare them well for their future careers. This also assists the planning of future vocational provision tailored to meet the needs of the students. The college, in partnership with others, is planning for the implementation of ICT and construction specialised diplomas in 2007. The college involves many students in a range of extra-curricular activities, which they enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The college is rightly proud of the priority it places on providing an environment in which students feel safe and well cared for. Procedures for safeguarding students are robust, child

protection and health and safety procedures are good and sound progress has been made in helping students adopt healthy lifestyles. Parents' confidence in the college has justifiably improved as they have become aware of the many improvements taking place. Some parents consider that the college still does not communicate with them well and staff are seeking to improve this aspect of their work. Students are guided well in course selection at the end of Year 9 and they express satisfaction with the help they are given at this important stage of their lives. They are also helped to make well-informed choices of what to do when they leave the college. Guidance and support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities are very good, with effective procedures for the early identification of those who need extra help. Arrangements for tracking and monitoring the progress of individual students have improved over recent years and the current system is beginning to ensure that the academic progress of individual students is well known. Students are aware of their individual targets, which reflect what they should achieve and what they can aspire to. Similarly, teachers now have the necessary data, though inconsistently used, to match work to individual students' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the college are satisfactory with elements that are good. The college uses challenging targets effectively to improve key areas. Senior leaders set a clear direction for the college. The college has expanded its leadership team, and has recently appointed several heads of department. This is enabling the development of a number of initiatives to support further the raising of achievement, for example, through rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and line management support focusing on students' learning. Many systems and initiatives are relatively new and have yet to have their full impact on improving achievement and personal development. Nevertheless, there are signs of improvement, for example in the Key Stage 4 results in 2007. Self-evaluation is detailed and the thorough development plan sets out the appropriate priorities for development. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Governors provide good support for the leadership of the college, and ask challenging questions based around their firm knowledge of the college. They have helpful training and are eager to increase their contribution to the college by working closely with departments. The college's specialist status is having a positive impact on curriculum development and extending links across the community.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation	3
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
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

11 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Selston Arts and Community College, Selston, NG16 6BW

Thank you for welcoming me and the inspection team into your college. An inspection is never easy for you or the adults who work with you and so we appreciated your readiness to talk to us and to help us when we got lost. Your views and the opinions of your families have helped us to understand what Selston is like.

We were impressed with the difference that becoming a specialist arts college has made to your education. The school council described how it has transformed the college and improved the facilities available to you. You now have more opportunities to participate in the local community and the range of courses you can study at Key Stage 4 has increased. We know that these have proved very motivating and the college's results in the summer went up in part because of this. You are making satisfactory progress in your time at the college but we know that the headteacher and the adults who work at Selston want you to do even better. We think that the information you now have about your targets is very helpful in achieving that goal.

We were also impressed by how well you co-operate with one another and your good relationships with adults. When you were challenged by your work in lessons you rose to the demands well. We understood why the college is said to have a 'happy feel.'

Our recommendations for what the college can do to improve further are:

- in your lessons, give more opportunity for you to learn through asking questions, conducting your own investigations and evaluating how well you and other young people in the class did;
- increase the pace of progress you make in your learning so that all of you fulfil your potential.

Thank you again for making our inspection so enjoyable and rewarding.

Yours sincerely David Simpson HMI