

Colonel Frank Seely Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122867
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	314428
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1088
6th form	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Sadler
Headteacher	Mr I J Gage
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2004
School address	Flatts Lane Calverton Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG14 6JZ
Telephone number	0115 9652495
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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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of Calverton and the surrounding villages in Nottinghamshire. It also attracts pupils from the outskirts of Nottingham. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average. A small proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of educational need is below average, as is the number of pupils who have learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have disabilities. The school is a specialist school for mathematics and computing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their work, reflecting the satisfactory quality of the teaching they receive. Teachers know their subjects well, but there is a tendency for pupils to be engaged in too much listening rather than being actively involved in their own learning. In some lessons, there is not a sharp enough focus on what is to be learned. As a result, although pupils like coming to school, their enjoyment of the education they receive is only satisfactory. In well-taught lessons all groups of pupils make good or better progress. In those which are satisfactory, or in the small number which are inadequate, it tends to be the boys who make least progress because their interest and therefore concentration is not sustained. In the 2007 GCSE examinations, pupils made satisfactory progress but the boys' progress was significantly below that of girls. In response, the school's leaders have put into place a series of measures to ensure that boys' progress improves. This is having success. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

The school's leaders have also made some improvements to the curriculum. This was not serving well those pupils who prefer more practical, vocationally orientated courses. Some such courses have now been introduced and in the case of science, for example, are playing an important part in raising standards. In addition, those who would benefit are now able to take some examination courses early. For example, some Year 9 pupils are studying food technology at lunchtime and after school and will take their GCSE examination in this subject in Year 10. They are producing some high quality work and it is evident that these pupils are highly motivated. Some pupils take their GCSE in mathematics in Year 10. Nevertheless, the school's leaders recognise that there is more to do to improve the curriculum, particularly in extending the range of vocational and work-based courses. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being. Of the school's specialist subjects, provision in mathematics is good, and in information and communication technology (ICT) it is satisfactory. However, good links in both subjects have been made with the community, for example providing support for primary schools and giving lessons to local adults.

The school's leaders keep the school under review. The evaluation process is satisfactory. It has identified some weaknesses in the quality of its work and robust actions have been taken to remedy them. There are detailed three yearly reviews of departments' provision and shorter annual reviews. Both include an analysis of departments' success in helping pupils to learn. These reviews are helping to ensure that department leaders are accountable and are leading to some improvements, but are inconsistent in bringing about rapid improvement to the quality of teaching and learning.

Pupils are well cared for and the school is successful in encouraging their personal development. It helps them to appreciate the importance of healthy living. They put this into practice when choosing food in the school dining room. Attendance is good and is well supported by the school. Pupils' personal development is good. They get along well with each other and with the adults in school. A small proportion of parents had concerns about behaviour, but the inspectors' view is that it is satisfactory. Bullying does occur, although it is infrequent. Pupils are confident that any such incidents will be appropriately dealt with. Racist incidents are rare and pupils feel safe. Pupils make a good contribution to both the school and the wider community.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students reach average standards in their work and they make satisfactory progress, reflecting the satisfactory teaching they receive. They enjoy school and this is shown by their positive attitudes to learning, their good attendance and the fact that retention rates are high. Sixth formers make a good contribution to the life of the school. They act as prefects, engage well with younger pupils and support extra-curricular activities. This in turn enhances their personal development, which is good.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective in monitoring provision and supporting students' learning. Helpful advice and guidance is provided so that they know what they need to do to improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory. It consists mostly of academic subjects. The school's leaders recognise the scope for further improvement through introducing applied learning options in partnership with other providers. The planning for this is at an advanced stage. The targets for the uptake of the school's specialist subjects have not yet been achieved. Students benefit from a good range of additional learning opportunities, including work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and links with higher education. This supports their preparation for future education and working life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the characteristics of the best lessons are much more consistently adopted and that the monitoring of lessons checks that this is successful.
- Develop the curriculum, including that in the sixth form, so that it caters better for pupils whose interests are practical and work-related.

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

When pupils join the school in Year 7 their standards are broadly average, as they are by the end of Year 11. This indicates satisfactory progress. The percentage of pupils who obtain five or more GCSE A* to C grades is in line with the national average. In 2007 however, there were wide differences in the performances of boys and girls. Boys achieved particularly poorly in English and a significant number underachieved in a range of other subjects. The evidence seen during the inspection, including observations of progress in lessons, a scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own data shows that this problem has been much reduced this year. There has been good, early identification of underachievement and effective support strategies have been put into place. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, progress in 2007 was at the expected level in mathematics. The target for mathematics was exceeded, but it was only moderately challenging. Progress was below that expected in science, English and in ICT. Currently, the school's data and the work seen during the inspection show that standards are rising but some ICT targets may not be achieved. The progress made by pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities is good. They receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is their moral and social development which is strongest. Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons and as a result their feeling of safety is good. Exclusion rates are low. However, overall behaviour is only satisfactory because pupils' attitudes do not contribute strongly enough to good learning in lessons. They sometimes need guidance from staff on how to conduct themselves, to which they usually respond well. Pupils take their health seriously, they are concerned to eat healthily for example. Their attendance is good. The school council plays a very active role in the life of the school. Its recent campaign to have a wet weather shelter installed has been successful.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

There are a number of examples of good or better teaching, although too high a proportion remains satisfactory and a small number of lessons are inadequate. There are inconsistencies and variability in performance across the school and within departments. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects. Most pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn and there are good relationships between the school's teaching staff and the pupils. The best lessons are challenging, using a range of effective practical activities. They proceed at a good pace and employ lively, skilful questioning to involve the pupils fully in their learning. The ICT facilities provided as part of the school's specialist status are beginning to have an impact on the quality of learning. For example in one Year 9 mathematics lesson, pupils were highly motivated by a lively computer programme that challenged them to find the answers to some algebraic questions. As a result, the pace of learning was very high. A geography lesson used an admirable range of resources, including ICT, to teach about aiding less developed countries. In the less successful lessons, pupils often have to listen to the teacher for too long. The objectives of the lesson are often a list of tasks to complete rather than a clear description of exactly what pupils should learn. This means that the teacher's questions and the learning activities are not sharply focused, and the potential for learning is reduced. In these lessons there is also too little provision of work to suit the different abilities of the pupils.

In general, the pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to evaluate their own and each others' work. The setting and marking of homework is too variable. Some work is marked frequently, with admirable detail and helpful comments to support learning. However, some books are marked too infrequently and have too few constructive comments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

There is a range of good enrichment programmes including fast-track courses in food technology and general studies offered in Year 9. In Year 10, pupils have the opportunity to complete their mathematics course early. There is good challenging provision for them subsequently, including an additional mathematics or statistics qualification at GCSE. The school has increased its provision of practically based courses. These are offered for example in construction and applied science and more effectively meet some pupils' interests. The school recognises that this provision is currently too limited. The number of pupils studying ICT in Years 10 and 11 is below the target level. The school has a broad range of extra curricular activities that are well supported by pupils, enhancing their overall enjoyment of life in the school. The requirement for religious education provision is not met in the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils settle well when they join the school in Year 7. This is a result of the care the school takes in working with primary schools to ensure that the transition is an easy one. It provides a good example of the school's caring approach. Procedures for child protection are securely in place and procedures for safeguarding learners fully meet government requirements. Continuity for the care, guidance and support of pupils is good because a head of guidance is assigned to each 'house' covering pupils in Years 8 to 11. This helps to ensure effective academic and personal support for pupils. The school has a good range of intervention strategies in place to support underachieving pupils, including extra lessons. Most pupils are aware of their learning targets. The learning support department has fostered very good partnerships with external agencies and links with parents. An effective team of teaching assistants support pupils who need extra help. The guidance that pupils receive in relation to school courses and careers has improved and is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school's leaders have a clear view of how it should develop. Current strategic planning is good. Plans for enhancing the curriculum further are well advanced. There has been a swift and effective response to some disappointing results at GCSE in 2007. Managers have introduced a means of keeping the school under review and for ensuring that those with leadership responsibilities are supported and challenged. Subject leaders meet their managers regularly to review progress. They are involved in the monitoring of their departments' work. This includes observation of teaching, checking on homework, setting and the marking of work. Nevertheless, while this is bringing about improvement, the rate of improvement is uneven across the school. The sharing of good practice is underdeveloped as a strategy for improvement, although there is some good use of mathematics teachers to demonstrate to others the effective use of ICT in lessons. Staff in the English department have done some very thorough work to understand

the difficulty which pupils have with different aspects of the course, although it is too soon to evaluate its success. This level of evaluation is not standard practice in other subjects. Recent targets for the school have not all been sufficiently challenging. This has been recognised and rectified. Governors know the school well and are providing a good drive for improvement.

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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	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 school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	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	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	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	3	2
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	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	3	

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?	2	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?	3	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	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	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

16 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colonel Frank Seely School, Calverton, NG14 6JZ

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We spoke to quite a number of you in meetings, in lessons and around the school and found you to be polite and helpful. Thanks to those of you who helped us find our way around too!

The inspection found that your school is satisfactory, and the sixth form is too. We found some good, positive things, for example, your attendance is good. You have a good knowledge of how to be healthy and you use that knowledge when choosing your lunches. We were pleased that bullying is quite rare and that you feel the school deals with it quickly when it does happen. We were also pleased that there is little racist behaviour and that you feel safe in school. You develop well as individuals and your school takes good care of you.

We are suggesting some ways in which your school can develop further and you have an important role to play in that. We are asking your school to find ways for you to be more actively involved in lessons, rather than having to listen too much. When this did happen, we saw that your learning was usually better. Some of you like to learn in more practical ways, and your school is gradually introducing more practical courses. We are suggesting that this is taken further. Finally, your school should look at the best lessons there are and see how more can be like that. You can help in this by trying yourselves to be more involved in lessons, by checking what you should be learning in each lesson and asking your teacher for help if you are not achieving it.

Best wishes for your future.

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector