

# Southam College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125738
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315299
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Usha Devi 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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1037
6th form	100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bob Stevens
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mick Thompson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Welsh Road West Southam CV47 0JW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01926 812560
<b>Fax number</b>	01926 815807

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<b>Age group</b>	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 school

Southam College is larger than the average sized school. Most of the students are from White British backgrounds. Very few students are learning English as an additional language. The number of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is higher than the national average. The college achieved its Specialist Technology Status in 2000, Humanities College Status in 2004 and Vocational College Status in 2006. The college has received a national award in recognition of its involvement in the Engineering Education Scheme.

## 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 and improving college and it has some outstanding features. The headteacher provides strong direction and purposeful leadership. Senior managers, staff and governors support him well and share his commitment to build on previous achievements and make the college even better. The college effectively uses monitoring and self-evaluation processes to identify whole-school strengths and areas for improvement. However, subject leaders' monitoring and evaluation are not always as rigorous as they could be. This sometimes leads to inconsistent feedback to staff about their performance and the steps they need to take to accelerate students' progress.

Students join the college with standards that are similar to those found nationally. From this starting point, students make good progress overall. They make outstanding progress in mathematics and physical education (PE). In 2005, the college was in the top 12% for progress in mathematics. In 2007, it was in the top 6%. Students with LDD make outstanding progress because of the excellent individual support and academic guidance they receive. Following the previous inspection, the college staff reviewed their teaching methods, improved their systems for monitoring students' progress and provided boys who were at risk of underachieving with targeted support. These combined actions successfully improved the levels of boys' attainment. School data and national tests results show that boys are making better progress than previously. However, the college is aware that while the progress of boys has improved, in 2007, girls in Key Stage 4 did not perform as well as expected. The college has recently introduced additional support through individual and group sessions. Early indications are that their progress is beginning to improve.

At the time of the last inspection leadership and management of the sixth form was unsatisfactory. The rate of progress made by students in the sixth form was also slower than the progress made by students in the main school. The college successfully responded to these areas of improvement by restructuring staffing, disseminating effective teaching methods and more closely monitoring the progress of students. This has had a positive impact on the leadership and management of the sixth form, which is now good. Students are now making good and improving progress. The latest data show sixth form students are performing above local and national averages. This, coupled with the college's positive impact on boys' achievement, demonstrates its good capacity to improve further. Teaching and learning are good and some is outstanding. The progress that students make accelerates when teachers ensure an appropriate balance between teacher input and the opportunity for students to work independently. Students also make rapid progress when teachers give them the opportunity to evaluate the quality of their work, and set and review their targets for improvement. In one excellent art lesson, the teacher provided students with individual guidance and feedback that enabled them to make accelerated progress and produce work of a very high standard. One student commented, 'this approach inspires me to improve'. However, this highly effective practice is inconsistent and the overall academic guidance that students receive is good.

The curriculum is good. The college uses its Specialist Status well to extend the curriculum and offer an outstanding range of enrichment activities. Links with local businesses, for example, effectively support the delivery of enterprise education. Good care and guidance provided by the school ensure that students' personal development and well-being are good with outstanding features. Notable strengths include students' excellent understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle and the contribution they make to the college and local community.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Standards in the sixth form are above average and achievement is good. Since the previous inspection, there has been a marked improvement. The college's latest assessment data show that the upward trend in students' achievement is set to continue. Students make good progress because of good teaching. A small proportion of teaching is outstanding. Students demonstrate high levels of maturity towards their studies. Students relish opportunities to work independently. For example, in one outstanding information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, the students explored a database for a car hire company. Students appreciate detailed information on the progress they are making and the steps they need to take to meet their learning targets. However, not all teachers use such productive methods consistently. Some students commented that a few teachers 'do not push you to your limit'.

Sixth form students' personal development is good. An exceptional feature is the outstanding contribution they make to the community. Many help younger students with reading, others run activities for these students and offer support in primary schools. Whilst there are many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the college does not sufficiently monitor this provision. Consequently, some students' development in these aspects is restricted. It is also possible for a sixth form student to avoid all sporting activity. Almost all Year 13 students enter university, nearly all being prepared to move away from home for the best course which meets their needs.

Good leadership and management have successfully tackled the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Outstanding links with other institutions significantly enrich students' experiences, preparing them well for the future.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure students achieve consistently well, particularly girls in Key Stage 4.
- Increase the opportunities students have to work independently and evaluate the quality of their work.
- Use the existing best practice to iron out inconsistencies in monitoring and evaluating the performance of teaching.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good overall. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is average. In the 2007 end of Year 9 national tests, students made good progress in English and science and excellent progress in mathematics. The progress they made in mathematics was in the top 2% of schools nationally. In contrast, students in Key Stage 4 made slower progress compared to those in Key Stage 3. Girls did not perform as well as boys. There were also some variations in performance between subjects, with students doing less well in English. However, current college data show the proportion of students expected to achieve five GCSEs at grade C or higher this year has notably improved. This is a result of targeted support and the reorganisation of teaching groups. The college recognises that further work is required to accelerate the progress made by girls. In the sixth form, standards have recently improved and are now above the average; achievement is good.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enjoy coming to college, feel safe and they have consistently very high levels of attendance. They have a good relationship with adults and value their support. There is a mutual appreciation of the well-organised mentoring opportunities available. A high proportion of students take part in the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, drama and music. A few parents expressed concerns about behaviour. However, both in lessons and around the college, behaviour is good. Students say that although incidents of bullying and poor behaviour do occasionally occur, the teachers deal with them quickly and effectively.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy contributing to the life of the college and wider community. For example, many students work effectively with primary schools as sports leaders, paired readers and they also arrange social activities for community groups. The students have an outstanding understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. This can be seen in their involvement in sport and their active role in ensuring the quality of food is good in the canteen. They also enjoy raising funds for charity and are particularly successful in this. Students take part in a good range of cultural events and experiences, for example exchange visits to Germany. The college council has made a good contribution to improving the college's ecological environment. Students' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are good and enable them to effectively develop the skills needed to move into working life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students make good progress across the college because of the good teaching they receive. Teachers plan lessons well and students are engaged by the interesting activities. Students' work is marked regularly and some teachers make helpful comments that identify the next steps students need to take to improve their learning. However, this is not yet a consistent practice. Students enjoy their lessons and they behave well. This ensures lessons run smoothly and enhances the progress they make. There are examples of outstanding practice. In the best lessons, teachers give students opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through tasks that encourage independence and enquiry. Students have good relationships with their teachers and this motivates them to work hard. Where teachers ask probing questions, students have the opportunity to give extended answers. This further accelerates the students' learning. The college is working towards making sure all teachers use this strategy in lessons.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because teachers and other adults tailor activities and support to meet their needs. In some lessons, teachers plan appropriate challenges for the more able. For instance, in an effective mathematics lesson, students were encouraged to find alternative methods for solving problems. The college is working hard to ensure all teachers plan lessons that challenge students of all abilities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The college provides a good curriculum that contributes to students achievements. Worthy of special note is the provision made for students who enter the college with below expected levels of literacy. The special classes attended by these students in Years 7 to 9 help to improve their literacy. This leads them to achieve well in GCSE examinations. The college effectively meets the needs of students through a range of vocational subjects. These subjects also serve the local economy well. Staff are working well with other local schools and colleges to extend the range of vocational subjects. Providing the opportunity for higher attaining students to study three sciences at GCSE not only results in an appropriate challenge to these students but also provides a very strong base for those wishing to continue studying science after the age of 16.

A high proportion of students take part in the exemplary range of activities outside compulsory lessons. As an example, nearly one fifth of the students took part in a recent dance performance. Visits to the battlefields in France contribute positively to students' historical insight and cultural development. An impressive number of students represent the college in an extensive range of sports, many of which take place on Saturdays. An annual summer school not only develops learning but also eases the move from primary school for many students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care for students is a strong feature of the college, with most parents agreeing that their children are safe and making good progress academically and in their personal development. Requirements for safeguarding and child protection are in place and regularly reviewed. The college promotes students' well-being effectively through its own provision and its outstanding work with a broad range of outside agencies.

The college provides students with good guidance on their choice of courses for GCSE and advanced level and for life outside of the college. The guidance given to support them in making progress towards achieving their test and examination target levels and grades is good, although there are some inconsistencies in day-to-day feedback amongst teachers. A small minority of parents say that the college has not responded to their concerns about target-setting days. The college does offer the opportunity for individual interviews with subject teachers but recognises the need to communicate more effectively. The academic reviews and personal support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effective, enabling them to make outstanding progress throughout college.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher, supported by the senior staff, leads the college with a strong and principled approach. His exacting standards command respect from staff and students. Systems for

monitoring and evaluation are well established. The college is aware it needs to do more work in ensuring all leaders are accurate in identifying the next steps teachers need to take to improve their work. The leadership and management of the college, including the governors, demonstrate a commitment to driving forward college improvement. Leaders have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and the areas it needs to develop. The college knows it needs to provide teachers with more opportunities to share outstanding practice.

The college sets ambitious targets for students and systems are in place to identify any students who underachieve and to intervene swiftly. The impact of the college's Specialist Status is good and the college has forged excellent links with its many partners to enhance the curriculum. For example, the college works with business partners to provide enterprise and work-related experience for students. Overall, parents, carers and the local community hold the school in high regard. Leaders deploy staff and other resources effectively and they secure good value for money. The college is characterised by its strong community ethos and high expectations in which students flourish.



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## 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?	2	2
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<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	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	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	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

28 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Southam College, Southam, CV47 0JW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave all of us when we inspected your college. We appreciated your readiness to talk to us about your work and valued the opportunity to see how you are getting on. Your comments were very helpful to our understanding of your college.

- Your college is good and has some outstanding features. The quality of education has improved in the sixth form and it is now good. The overall progress you make is good. You make outstanding progress in mathematics and PE and reach standards that are much better than in most schools and colleges. Many of you told us that you are well looked after and you have good relationships with the staff. You enjoy being at Southam and feel, rightly, that you are progressing well. We agree with this view. Some notable strengths are
- Teaching is good and some teaching is outstanding in the college and the sixth form.
- The range of subjects is good and there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, especially sport, drama and music activities.
- The exemplary support the college provides for students who are experiencing difficulties.
- The way the college uses its Technology, Humanities and Vocational Specialisms to enhance the curriculum and help you progress well.
- The positive part you play by attending regularly and behaving well in lessons and around the college.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and all staff share the commitment to keep improving the college. Some things can be better still. We have asked Mr Thompson, staff and governors to make sure you all do as well as you can throughout your time in the college, and particularly girls in Key Stage 4. In your lessons, we have asked teachers to give you more opportunities to work independently and evaluate how well you are doing. We have also asked staff who lead on aspects of the college's work to consistently check how well things are going.

You can help your college improve further by continuing to work hard, attending regularly and sharing your views and ideas for improvement with staff.

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

Usha Devi Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector