

North Leamington Community School and Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125748
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315302
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1338
6th form	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julian Humphreys
Headteacher	David Hazeldine
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Cloister Way Leamington Spa CV32 6QF
Telephone number	01926 338711
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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 school

North Leamington Community School and Arts College is an above average size comprehensive currently located on three sites. Work has begun on building a new school on a single campus and relocation is scheduled for 2009. Just over four fifths of pupils are of White British background. About 7% are of Indian Asian heritage and the rest are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A below average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has seven looked after children. The school became a specialist arts college in 1999.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Although satisfactory overall, the school has clear strengths. Most notable is the extent to which the school welcomes all and ensures that groups of learners, regardless of their background, make good progress in their personal development. The school is collaborating with a wide range of partners and this has clearly brought benefits, particularly in terms of the quality of care and in promoting personal development. Members of the school community very much enjoy the opportunities associated with the school's arts college status.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with the national average. In recent years, the school has not raised standards and achievement because it has not ensured teaching is consistently well matched to pupils' different abilities. Despite this weakness, teaching and learning are satisfactory because there is also much good teaching that motivates and sometimes excites pupils. The good care, support and guidance make an important contribution to ensuring all groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily. Although the school's arts college status has not, in recent years, improved attainment, it contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils positively contribute to the life of the school and to the wider community and through this develop important skills for life beyond school. They have commendably positive attitudes towards learning and the diversity that is an important part of the character of their school. The vast majority of pupils behave very well, however, where teaching is weaker, learning is sometimes disrupted by a small minority of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3. For this reason behaviour is satisfactory, although significant other strengths make pupils' personal development and well-being good overall. The curriculum is good, primarily because arts college status has led to a broadening of the experiences offered, and the recent developments to cater more for the full ability range at Key Stage 4 and beyond have been effective.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. As a result of energetic and determined leadership, a new 'state of the art' school is being constructed. All members of the school community are excited by the longer-term vision this represents. However, the school has not taken enough action to improve attainment and achievement in recent years. Leaders and managers have not focused sufficiently on improving outcomes for pupils. Their monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school have not ensured enough consistency in teaching. The school recognises that this is the case and has taken important steps to rectify the situation. The school has identified the good practice it needs to develop more consistently across the school. Targets are challenging and are used well with older pupils. The school is in the process of improving its tracking of all pupils so it has a much better oversight of their progress. This points to a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Attainment of students entering the sixth form is below the national average. About 75% of students transfer to the sixth from Year 11. The school's 'open door' policy, results in significant numbers enrolling who have not attained well previously in other schools. Students achieve well from their different starting points and the standards they attain are broadly in line with the national average.

Leaders and managers provide a clear sense of direction and focus on raising achievement and attainment. The positive learning ethos reflects the students' good approach to learning. Good teaching ensures all students are actively involved in their learning, and information and communication technology (ICT) adds variety. Higher ability students have the opportunity to extend their learning. Very good assessment includes examples of graded work to guide teachers' marking and planning. The broad curriculum provides a wide range of academic courses and a growing number of vocational programmes. Student apprenticeships and links with the local further education college are effective in retaining students who otherwise may not have remained in education. A diverse range of enrichment activities embrace sports, arts and community service.

The school takes great care to ensure that students choose appropriate courses and supports them well both personally and academically, resulting in high retention rates. Staff know students well and their performance is reviewed regularly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the good practice identified through the senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is implemented consistently across the school to improve pupils' progress and attainment.
- Improve the tracking of pupils' progress so it promotes good achievement.
- Improve lessons by ensuring all teaching matches the different abilities and needs of learners, particularly in Key Stage 3.

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: 2

At Key Stage 4, results in 2007 declined when compared to the previous year. The number of pupils gaining five A* to C grades overall was slightly below the national average, although when English and mathematics are included it was in line with national expectations. Despite the fall in results, the progress pupils make from when they leave primary school is satisfactory. In 2007, GCSE results were good in double award science, English language, geography and information technology but below the national expectations in art and design, business studies, single award science, French, German and history. Mathematics results are now satisfactory.

The progress pupils make in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. The standards achieved by pupils in the end of Year 9 national tests vary but are broadly average overall. In 2007, standards in English were the highest of the three core subjects. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory largely because of the school's effective care, support and guidance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school and relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils make significant contributions to the community and the school, for example they are keen to be prefects. The school parliament is effective and has resulted in an increase in the support older pupils provide for younger ones. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. They appreciate the range of food on offer in the canteen and the good provision for sport promotes physical development. Specialist school status has enabled the school to set up its own popular and successful dance company. Large numbers of pupils are involved in after-school clubs and enrichment activities.

Where teaching is effective, pupils enjoy their education and behave very well. Pupils develop the skills needed to be effective in their working lives. Although average numbers of pupils gain higher GCSE grades in English and mathematics, other key skills develop well. 'Super learning days', involving all pupils in a range of enterprise activities, enhance work-related learning.

The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good. Pupils reflect on important aspects of life through various lessons such as critical thinking and philosophy. There is good cultural awareness and the school is a harmonious multi-racial community. Attendance rates have improved, because of a range of actions taken by the school including the effective use of a key worker who liaises closely with staff and parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most teachers structure their lessons well and share learning objectives with the pupils so that the purpose of their work is clear. However, teachers' planning too often does not take sufficient account of the range of abilities in the classes taught, particularly in Key Stage 3. As a result, pupils typically make satisfactory progress in lessons. The lack of challenge on occasions leads to some minor disruption of lessons. In a minority of lessons, teachers successfully ensure pupils of quite different ability levels achieve well. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. Where teaching is most effective, teachers expect much more of pupils and involve them in evaluating their progress using criteria at different levels. Enjoyment of learning is good because of the opportunities for pupils to be more creative in lessons. Teachers provide good ongoing oral feedback and support, especially as they circulate around the class, so that pupils generally know how well they are doing. Good relationships increase pupils' engagement in learning. Learning is better in Key Stage 4 where there is more effective classroom management and teaching is better matched to pupils' needs. The setting, marking and appropriateness of homework are not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. In Years 7 to 9, National Curriculum subjects are well complemented by courses in dance and drama. The recently introduced 'Opening Minds' course for Year 7 is helping pupils see the links between different subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the good range of subjects embrace vocational and workplace learning well and currently link effectively to sixth form provision. Growing collaboration with further education providers is strengthening the provision for those pupils who will not continue into the sixth form. The specific provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language is good as it builds their confidence and helps them to integrate well. Although online provision supports the gifted and talented, pupils and parents would like further opportunities to be available. Extra-curricular activities, especially those of the arts college, motivate pupils and participation is high. A growing focus on activities which promote community cohesion and new schemes of work for personal, social and health education impact well on pupils' personal development. The school has achieved the International Schools Award through its links with countries in four continents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good quality of care and guidance provided by the school has a strong impact on pupils' personal development. The new student personal development course is effective and viewed positively by pupils. Many parents and pupils feel that staff are willing to 'go the extra mile' to provide support and opportunities for pupils. The arrangements for child protection meet legal requirements. Systems to ensure pupils work in a safe environment are good, resulting in them feeling safe and secure. Most are confident with how the school deals with bullying. If pupils have concerns, they know whom they can turn to for support. The school makes good use of a number of external agencies. This support is particularly helpful in meeting needs of more vulnerable pupils. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and contributes significantly to these pupils making satisfactory progress. The school has reduced exclusions by involving governors at an early stage and by the introduction of short-term, in-school provision as an alternative to exclusion.

The school has correctly recognised the need to make further improvements to its tracking systems so that it becomes more robust in ensuring effective action is taken to promote good achievement. However, these developments have yet to have sufficient impact. Teachers provide effective additional help for individuals and groups in lessons. At Key Stage 4, the school targets its support on those that need it most. The extent to which marking explains how work can improve varies. A lack of guidance sometimes results in pupils being unsure how they can improve despite written comments from teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Monitoring and evaluation happen regularly so senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the school's leadership has not established a sufficiently robust system to ensure that the good practice identified is implemented consistently across the school. The school sets appropriately challenging targets and these motivate older pupils. The whole-school tracking system currently is not used effectively enough in promoting good achievement, particularly at Key Stage 3. The analysis of the views of parents and pupils is helping improve the school's evaluation procedures. In recent years, the school has ensured pupils achieve satisfactorily but there has not been sufficient emphasis on improving attainment and progress. School improvement plans have not responded to dips in pupils' performance and do not sufficiently clarify how improvements will influence the outcomes for pupils. This has contributed to inconsistencies; for instance, the use of learning objectives and outcomes has not ensured all pupils can achieve well.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors undertake their duties conscientiously and play an important role in promoting the school in the community and in developing inclusion. However, they have not set targets for the senior leadership that ensure improved achievement.

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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	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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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?	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	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	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

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	2
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	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	3	
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

23 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Leamington Community School and Arts College, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 6QF

We would like to thank you for making us so welcome in your school. Particular thanks should be extended to those pupils we interviewed for their comments that helped us confirm our judgements about your school.

- Although we think your school is satisfactory overall, we recognise that it has clear strengths:
- We think there is a very good mix of pupils and you all get on well together.
- Relationships with adults are very good.
- There are high levels of enjoyment because of some of the exciting and creative opportunities associated with being an arts college.
- You are well cared for and your teachers are always prepared to do that bit extra for you.
- The curriculum is good so that most of you are undertaking the right courses at Key Stage 4.
- The vast majority of you want to learn and behave very well, although we recognise the actions of a small minority sometimes spoil lessons.

To improve further we have asked the school to implement the good teaching in some lessons throughout the school to monitor the progress you make more effectively and do more to ensure your achievement is good. We are also asking the school to make sure it challenges pupils of different abilities in all lessons because this is not always the case, particularly at Key Stage 3. You can help by making sure you know how you can achieve your targets and asking your teachers about this if needed.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick Her Majesty's Inspector