

# The Limes College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102957
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	323718
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Bowden

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>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Tony Brett-Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Emma Bradshaw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Sutton West Site Robin Hood Lane Sutton Surrey SM1 2SD
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8770 6955
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8770 4228

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the unit. They investigated the following issues:

- students' achievement
- the quality of teaching and learning
- leadership and management of the college.

Evidence was gained from lesson observations, from discussion with the headteacher, the chair of the management committee, the local authority line manager and students, and from an evaluation of a range of documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that most of the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

Limes College, formerly known as The Loxley Centre, has undergone significant reorganisation since the last inspection. This has included the amalgamation of a Key Stage 4 alternative provision and the authority's pupil referral unit. The college is part of the local authority's Vulnerable Pupils Panel (VPP) and a behaviour partnership which constitutes all of the secondary schools in Sutton. It has 100 designated places for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The breadth of provision now includes separate Key Stage 3 and 4 programmes, a multi-agency team, a family support group for any parent who has a child at a secondary school in the authority, and use of mainstream education providers to offer a range of accredited courses for students. The Loft Project, a multi-agency drugs project, is located within and managed by the college. The college itself operates on two sites within the borough.

Since the reorganisation, the number of students on roll has increased significantly. All learners who attend the college are either excluded or at risk of exclusion from mainstream or special schools. There is a high level of student mobility throughout the year, a significant number having attended more than two schools. Currently, there are twice as many boys as girls on roll. Approximately 75% are of White British origin and others are from a range of other minority ethnic backgrounds. Six students have a statement of special educational need and three are looked after by the local authority.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The college is effective in meeting its core aim of enabling students to learn to the best of their ability and rekindle their interest in education. As a result, almost all students in Key Stage 3 continue their education in mainstream schools or other specialist mainstream provision, and most Key Stage 4 students move on to further education or training. The good leadership by the headteacher has ensured the college has made good progress in meeting its new responsibilities within the local authority. A significant strength is its work in partnership with other professionals and outside agencies to promote students' well-being. In addition, it works in close collaboration with all the secondary schools in Sutton through the VPP. Parents are appreciative of the college's work. One commented, 'My son has matured and is more self-assured since attending the college. He has also begun to respect other people's feelings in a more positive way.'

When students join the college, their attainment is mostly well below average. This is as a result of gaps in their learning caused by challenging histories, disrupted schooling and poor attendance. Although standards remain below average at the end of Year 11, students make good progress in relation to their starting points because of the high-quality individual attention they receive. Students achieve well, making good gains in basic skills, particularly in English and mathematics. Last year, three quarters of Year 11 gained one or more A\* to G grades in GCSE examinations. Over a third achieved at least one grade C or better. Almost all students gain accreditation either through adult literacy and numeracy courses or through standard examination routes. Increasing numbers of students are taking GCSE courses and are predicted to do well this year. Students' progress is faster in English than in mathematics because there has been turbulence in mathematics staffing. Students make gains in their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, but because their progress is not recorded across all subject areas, the college is unclear about the full extent of their rate of progress. Students do increasingly well in the growing range of non-standard vocational courses on offer.

In Years 7 to 9 most students on support programmes generally make rapid progress in addressing the challenging targets in their individual action plans (IAPs). As a result of their raised confidence and self-esteem, they are able to overcome more readily previous barriers to learning, improve their skills and successfully reintegrate into mainstream schools or other specialist provision. Those with a statement of special educational need make good progress towards their personal, behavioural and social targets. Their increasingly positive attitudes to learning allow them to make up lost ground in literacy and numeracy.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. For example, they explore issues surrounding the diverse ethnic backgrounds of students and staff through the personal, social and health education programme, daily lessons and assemblies. Many have had a negative experience of education before arriving at the college. However, because of the outstanding individual support they receive, students improve their self-esteem and interact positively with one another and the adults who look after them. This successfully rekindles their interest in, and enjoyment of, education. One student commented how the college had given him a 'fresh start'. They enjoy the college and appreciate its focus on promoting healthy lifestyles. Students regularly prepare healthy lunches for their peers and staff. Their attendance improves considerably when they start at the college, sometimes by as much as 40%. Most attend regularly. However, attendance overall is satisfactory because of the irregular attendance of a small minority. Students' behaviour, which for some can be difficult

when they join the unit, improves considerably and is good overall. As one student commented, 'Behaviour is not always the best; we can kick off but we are more controlled. We all get on because we are all here for the same reason.' Students are involved in the development of their learning environment; for example, they were involved in the successful bid to the Youth Opportunities Fund for a covered area in the playground. Students' good progress in improving the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT eases their reintegration to mainstream school or other specialist provision and transition to further education and training.

Students learn well because of good teaching. Teachers and education project workers work well together in lessons. Staff are especially effective in creating a positive learning environment so that students mainly enjoy classes and are pleased with their success. Staff are consistent in their expectations of behaviour and manage their classes well. Excellent working relationships with students, based on teachers' sensitive understanding of the individual's needs, underpin the most successful lessons. Praise and encouragement are used well to sustain students' efforts so that they persevere with tasks, as in a successful English lesson for Year 11. Here, the teacher skilfully used a poem to draw students into a discussion of an earlier incident involving some disturbing conversations between students. This session contributed exceptionally well to the students' personal development and laid the groundwork for a concentrated period of coursework completion. Despite these good features, however, there are still some lessons, for example in mathematics, that are unimaginative and do not challenge students well enough to extend their understanding of work covered.

The curriculum meets the needs of students, enables them to improve their key skills and contributes significantly to their personal development. Key Stage 3 students follow the National Curriculum with extra well-thought out activities, which eases their reintegration to mainstream school or other specialist provision. Each Key Stage 4 student has an individual learning programme comprising both on and off-site provision. This is based on their ability, interests and aspirations, which prepares them well for progression to the next stage of their career. The curriculum is enlivened by a range of enrichment activities, including an outdoor education programme. Although ICT is used widely to help deliver the curriculum, there has been no audit as to the impact this has on students' overall progress. A wide range of vocational and other accredited courses are offered, but the impact of these on students' overall progress is not yet apparent. Despite a number of important strengths, the curriculum is therefore satisfactory overall.

The college provides high-quality care, guidance and support for students, and is particularly effective in the way it supports each individual, including the most vulnerable, in very specific ways. Highly effective working relationships with a range of other specialist agencies and professionals also contribute extensively to the good progress students make. This has enabled students to continue in mainstream education, other specialist mainstream provision or to progress to further education or training. Although the college's procedures for reducing absence work well with most students, it has yet to tackle successfully the absence of a small minority. Very effective procedures enable the college to track students' academic and personal progress, including the progress made towards achieving targets set out as part of their IAPs.

Leadership and management are good throughout the college. There is a clear vision, with a strong focus on rekindling students' interest in education, meeting their diverse and complex needs and improving their academic achievement and personal development. Effective self-evaluation has resulted in well-focused development planning, ensuring the college is becoming more effective in meeting its new remit within the local authority. Best use is made of the range of accommodation on both main sites. The headteacher has encouraged all staff

to develop their own leadership and management skills through effective delegation of roles and responsibilities. Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are used to identify and share good practice. The college ensures that every student really does matter and, therefore, makes good progress. All staff benefit well from continuing professional development opportunities. The college contributes satisfactorily to promoting community cohesion. Other than promoting community cohesion effectively within its own establishment, it is limited in what it can do because of the complex behavioural, emotional and social needs of students, their varying length of stay and high student mobility throughout the year. Governance is effective and focused, supporting the work of the college well.

Because of the significant changes in the college's remit since the last inspection, the impact of some of these changes has yet to be fully established. Nevertheless, these developments and the clear direction set for further improvement are enabling students to make good academic and personal progress. The college has good capacity to continue to improve even further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the attendance levels of all students, particularly by tackling the persistent absence of a minority.
- Audit the provision of ICT across the curriculum in order to check how well students are doing, and include this in students' overall assessment of ICT skills.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

02 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Limes College, Surrey, SM1 2SD

I was one of two inspectors who visited your college recently. We would like to thank you very much for the friendly way in which you welcomed us. We saw some of you in lessons and chatted to a number of you individually. I also met with a group of older students for a more formal chat. It was good to hear that you like what the college has to offer and that you appreciate the 'second chance' it has given you. I was particularly impressed by your attitudes to healthy lifestyles and your enjoyment in preparing healthy food for lunch, for example at the main site. Congratulations to the 'head chef' who prepared the meat balls and pasta dish and to the others who prepared healthy salads and baked some delicious scones! I also know that your parents are pleased with the progress you make at the college, which means some of you will be returning full-time to your mainstream schools or moving on to further education when you leave at the end of Year 11. The college provides a good quality of education for you. This is because:

- the headteacher and others with posts of responsibility run the college well
- during your time there, you make good progress in your learning and personal development
- teachers make their lessons interesting and give you all the help and support they can
- the curriculum and the wide range of other activities at the college and off-site help prepare you for your future
- all the adults who work with you make sure you are safe and well cared for
- the college has excellent links with lots of other specialist agencies that help you make progress.

To make the college even better we have asked teachers to:

- check how well information and communication technology is used in all subjects and assess your progress in its use.

Some of you could help if:

- you improved your attendance and took advantage of the opportunities the college provides for you.

Once again, thanks for your friendly welcome. I would like to wish all of you the very best for your future.

Yours faithfully

James Bowden

Lead Inspector