

Selly Park Technology College for Girls

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 103498 |
| Local Authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 323843 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Kevin Sheldrick HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 735 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | A Rae |
| Headteacher | Michelle Magrs |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 September 2000 |
| School address | 5 Selly Park Road Selly Park Birmingham B29 7PH |
| Telephone number | 0121 4721238 |
| Fax number | 0121 4152799 |

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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

This college is smaller than the average secondary school. Nearly half the college's students are from Sparkbrook in Birmingham and the rest come from a range of areas in the south of the city. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is in line with other schools, although the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average. Attainment on entry is generally below average. Almost half the students are of Pakistani origin and about a seventh are White British. The rest are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Nearly three quarters of students do not have English as their first language, although few are at the early stages of learning English. The college gained specialist status for technology in 1996.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The outcomes achieved by this outstanding college are impressive. Students' achievement is outstanding so the college is consistently amongst the highest achieving schools in the country. Standards are above average and there has been a steady improvement in the school's results. The proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics has risen from below average to 12% above the national average in 2008. More able students make good progress, but the achievement of middle and lower attaining students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is outstanding.

In Years 7 to 9, the college successfully develops important literacy skills and establishes excellent relationships between adults and students. Many students benefit immensely from the very well organised after-college and Saturday learning sessions. These developments are crucial in ensuring students make rapid progress in Years 10 and 11. The very positive relationships between all members of the college community also contribute to the students' outstanding personal development. Behaviour is excellent around the college and students have very positive attitudes, even on the few occasions when teaching is not very inspiring. Students speak positively about how the college benefits from the presence of students from different faiths and cultural backgrounds. The college also ensures that its links with schools in the United Kingdom and others across the world promote positive relationships between communities and a shared sense of identity. The college recognises that not all parents are as involved as they could be in supporting their child's learning and is taking steps to improve this aspect. Very few parents returned the Ofsted parental questionnaire to give their views of the college.

The outstanding curriculum is a major factor in ensuring very high levels of enjoyment. Students like the choice of courses they have and speak very positively about the range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. The work-related curriculum further enhances students' motivation. The college ensures all students are successful and gain five or more GCSE passes. This important achievement is possible because of the first-class care, support and guidance the college provides. The college has highly effective systems in place to ensure students receive precisely the support they need. Students are very appreciative of, and motivated by, the additional time teachers give to ensuring they can achieve their targets. This also contributes to the above average attendance and the very low levels of exclusion.

Major strengths in students' personal development, the curriculum and the care and support provided ensure students learn extremely well. Teaching is good because students experience a wide variety of activities and there is an emphasis on ensuring enjoyment. The college's specialist status has increased the ways in which students can learn, including using information and communication technology (ICT). In some lessons, the most able are not challenged sufficiently. Teaching has improved more slowly than other aspects of provision because leaders have been slow to use the full range of achievement data and tackle the weaknesses that prevent more able students achieving challenging targets. Governance is outstanding, and leadership and management are good overall. The leadership team takes great care to implement initiatives so they have maximum effect. The college's self-evaluation is accurate and has resulted in the identification of priorities that can lead to further improvement. The college's capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the full range of achievement data more effectively and increase the challenge in teaching to raise the achievement of the most able students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are above average. The GCSE results are good overall, with particularly impressive performance in English and religious education. Until recently, fewer students than average gained five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. In 2008, 60% of students gained these qualifications, which is 12% above the national average. The results are as impressive for lower attaining students because the college ensures that every student gains at least five GCSE passes. The college is consistently above the national average on this measure. Results of this kind ensure that virtually every student goes on to further education, training or employment after Year 11.

In Years 7 to 9, students do not attain as well but results are steadily improving, particularly in English. The numbers of pupils achieving the standards expected for their age is above average. Fewer students gain the higher grades than found nationally, particularly in mathematics and science. In these earlier years, students make good progress in their literacy skills and in the development of relationships with their teachers.

When the attainment of students on entry to the college is considered, the college's performance has been consistently outstanding in every year since such records began. The progress of higher attaining students is good but the outstanding curriculum, care, support and guidance result in other groups making outstanding progress. This applies to students with a statement of special educational needs and other groups of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who receive additional support but do not have a statement. Although all minority ethnic groups make at least good progress, students from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and White British backgrounds make outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students display excellent attitudes towards their learning in lessons, when undertaking homework and through participation in extra support sessions, including Saturday morning college. Students speak highly of their college and are rightly very proud of it. Students develop exceptionally positive attitudes, and this makes a significant contribution to their achievement. Attendance levels are consistently above the national average and punctuality records are impressive. Through good snack and meal choices, and a keenness to participate in physical and creative activities both in and out of college, students lead good healthy lifestyles.

Students adhere to college routines and move around in a very orderly and safe fashion. Behaviour is excellent. Students feel safe and report that bullying is very rare. They have a highly developed understanding and acceptance of different views and cultures; several students remarked that the wide range and mix of religions and cultures in their college is what makes it so interesting and stimulating for all. Students contribute well to the college and wider community through fundraising and a range of responsibilities undertaken in college by Year

10 and Year 11 students. They value the college council because it has brought about some improvements, for instance refurbishing the toilets and the introduction of salads at lunchtime. It is especially noticeable how much more self-confident, self-assured, responsible and ambitious students become as they progress through the college. By the time they leave at the end of Year 11, students are prepared extremely well for their next stage of education and eventually the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, well founded on extremely positive relationships between teachers and students. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good. Lessons are usually planned and structured well. Clear learning targets are shared with students although sometimes these are not matched sufficiently well to the needs of the most able. Activities in lessons are matched well to the abilities of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those of middle and lower ability. Homework is set regularly and valued by students, who work diligently to achieve their target grades. In some subjects, the most able students do not benefit from carefully planned independent study. Usually learning resources are stimulating and engage students actively in their learning. Even where teaching is uninspiring, most students make good progress because they are well motivated to learn, and their attitudes to learning are very positive. Marking is inconsistent. Some exemplary practice sets clear targets of what to do to improve. Other marking, however, does not give students enough help to move their learning on because it does not identify clearly enough what they need to do to improve. Plans are in place to respond to the variability in teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum enables all students to achieve well and really enjoy what they do. Middle and lower ability students participate in highly effective out-of-hours lessons to catch up on coursework and consolidate learning in lessons. Students in Years 10 and 11 were particularly positive about their options. There is a good mix of academic and vocational courses. All girls undertake technology courses and benefit from a wide range of modern equipment, including computer-aided design. The curriculum ensures that students gain a good insight into the world of work through super learning days, Enterprise days and well-matched work placements. A very good range of out-of-school activities and visits enhances the curriculum. Good opportunities are provided for students to contribute to the local community through raising money for local charities and working with local primary schools. The links the college has with other schools are used very well to enrich the curriculum, particularly in science and physical education.

The organisation of groupings for different areas of study is flexible and allows teachers to target additional support to meet students' needs. The curriculum contributes well to students' personal development. An effective physical education and sports programme, healthy eating initiatives and programmes on use of drugs and on sexual health ensure that students are well aware of the components essential for a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum ensures that students are prepared well for their future lives by providing good opportunities for them to develop their literacy, numeracy and computer skills. This results in very high levels of attainment in

many areas where these skills are applied. The curriculum and enrichment activities allow students to develop a strong sense of moral and social responsibility. The college is promoting spiritual and cultural aspects well through religious education and the participation in, and celebration of, festivals in a range of religions. The college's specialist status has resulted in excellent innovative ICT and technology resources and the creation of a strong culture of learning across the college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to students throughout the college are excellent. The college has been particularly successful at identifying and supporting lower and middle ability students to help them reach challenging examination targets. To meet the needs of students, the college makes effective use of wide variety of staff both internally and through its links with external organisations. Staff take a very keen interest in every student and know their strengths and weaknesses very well. This in-depth knowledge adds to the evidence available through the college's rigorous tracking system. Of particular note is the considerable additional time staff give to help students. Consequently, relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students genuinely appreciate the extra effort their teachers put in to helping them, both personally and academically. They cite this as the reason why they apply themselves so well to achieving their best in order to repay their teachers for their hard work. Extremely robust systems are in place to support students' health and safety, including the child protection arrangements. As a result, pastoral elements, including behaviour, attendance and punctuality, and healthy living, continue to improve year on year on an already positive picture.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders at all levels share the college's vision of ensuring as many students as possible develop the skills needed to be successful in the future. The college ensures there is no discrimination and has been particularly effective in overcoming the barriers to learning for the majority of students. The college fully meets the government's safeguarding requirements. Professional development includes much research into good practice elsewhere. Leaders can then implement any developments more effectively so they have a positive impact on outcomes. For instance, the appointment of lead teachers has resulted in teachers experimenting further with new approaches to learning.

Community cohesion is good because the college makes effective use of students' experience and there are some highly developed links with other schools in the United Kingdom and across the world. The college is contributing to building a shared identity through links with a school in Cumbria that serves a contrasting community. However, many parents do not attend parents' evenings, partly because the college is located inconveniently for most of the community it serves. The college is working hard to develop its links with parents so that they become more involved in supporting learning. Self-evaluation is accurate and displays a refreshing candour about the small number of weaknesses that remain. There is variability in the effectiveness of middle leaders, and self-evaluation does not always lead to improvement quickly enough. The college recognises that the progress made in improving teaching does not match the rate of improvement elsewhere. Generally, challenging targets are used well but the focus on attainment, as measured by five or more GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has sometime

resulted in insufficient attention being given to the achievement targets for some students working at the highest levels.

Governors are highly effective because they have a very good awareness of the college and are prepared to take a lead in tackling some of the more challenging areas requiring improvement. Shortcomings in accommodation militate against the development of independent learning. There is insufficient space for students at lunchtimes.

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

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| 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

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

¹Grade 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

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| 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**

16 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Selly Park Technology College for Girls, Birmingham B29 7PH

I wanted to give you some brief feedback following the recent inspection of your college. Those students we interviewed deserve special thanks because their perceptive comments were vital in allowing us to understand your college.

We concluded that your college is outstanding. We were impressed with the high levels of achievement and the excellent personal development. The college is consistently in the top 5% of the highest performing schools in the country. Your behaviour on our visit was impeccable and we found no evidence to suggest it was anything other than exemplary at other times. These outcomes are a direct result of the first class curriculum and the very effective care, support and guidance you receive. There is also good teaching, especially in the considerable out-of-hours support your teachers provide. Many of you recognise that your teachers go beyond what might normally be expected and we think that many of you pay back your teachers by trying really hard to do well. We particularly liked the links you have developed with interesting people around the world. We think the leadership of your college is doing a good job in ensuring continued improvement. We agree that your accommodation, particularly at lunchtimes, could be a lot better.

As you are an outstanding college, we are not suggesting many areas for improvement. We think the college could do a little more to ensure that the achievement of the most able students is as outstanding as the rest. Occasionally, there is scope for teachers to highlight what more able students need to do to achieve at the very highest levels and review their progress on this at the end of lessons. You can help by asking for clarification about what you need to do when you are unsure of how you might achieve your challenging targets.

I should like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector