

Sir Jonathan North Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120279
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	327246
Inspection date	13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Greenwood
Headteacher	Alison Merrills
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	Knighton Lane East Leicester LE2 6FU
Telephone number	01162 708116
Fax number	01162 448 141

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. During a one-day visit, the inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: Key Stage 4 achievement and standards, and how consistently the individual needs of students are met in lessons and through the curriculum.

The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, discussions with students, staff and a representative of the governing body, scrutiny of students' work and college documentation, parental questionnaires and national assessment data. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that most of the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, although the college had been modest about some of its judgements. These have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Sir Jonathan North Community College is a larger than average comprehensive school and is the only girls' state school in Leicester. The college has three specialisms: visual arts (2001), science and mathematics (2005), and applied learning (2007). The college serves a culturally and socially diverse community. About half the students are White British, with the majority of the students from other ethnic origins being Asian Indian. Over 30 different languages are spoken. About a third of the students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Amongst the college's awards are the Healthy School Award, Arts Mark Gold, Inclusion Quality Mark, Investors in People and the Anti-Bullying Community Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good college is demonstrating that it has an outstanding capacity to improve. The leadership team has been rigorous in its drive to raise Key Stage 4 attainment following a disappointing set of results in 2007 and, as a result, achievement is now good and standards are above average. Students and parents value the outstanding care, support and guidance that the college provides. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. 'This school is a fantastic school' and 'there is a consistent comment that children from this school are rounded, able human beings' are typical of parent comments. The girls are articulate, confident and mature and are excellent ambassadors for the college. The college listens to, and acts upon, students' views and encourages them to take responsible roles. The student council is active in contributing to the welfare and care of their fellow students, celebrating the diverse heritage of their community, and taking an active role in promoting healthy lifestyles and eco-awareness through their own initiatives. The high quality of artwork displayed around the school provides an inspiring environment in which to learn.

Students join the college with levels of attainment that are slightly below average and the college has identified that many students learning English as a second language have low levels of literacy. By the end of Year 11, students attain standards that are above national expectations. This represents good progress. The results in Year 9 national tests have been consistently above average over the past three years, with students making best progress in science and mathematics, reflecting the impact of the college's specialisms. The college identified a number of factors that resulted in the 2007 GCSE results being below the national average. The leadership team was quick to respond by providing a more personalised curriculum to meet the students' needs better. Challenging targets are set for all students to promote good progress. Rigorous and sophisticated tracking of progress towards these targets has enabled the identification of students who are not on track, and appropriate and extensive programmes of support are now in place. As a result, unvalidated data shows that in 2008, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C passes including English and mathematics rose by 6% compared to the previous year. The number of students gaining the highest grades across all subjects also increased, as did the numbers achieving A* to C grades in the specialist subjects, with applied learning making the biggest improvement. The achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Students at an early stage of learning English make good progress as a result of effective language support. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that these improvements will be sustained.

Good leadership and management at all levels have been the main driving force towards raising attainment. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and her team is demonstrated by their clear vision for school improvement and the strategies they have put in place to bring about change. This vision is shared with the middle leadership team and the teaching staff, with an insistence on accountability and sharing responsibility for raising standards. Monitoring of the work of their departments by subject leaders is generally excellent, although this is not consistent and some subject leaders do not meet these very high standards. The college knows itself well and the leadership team responds quickly and effectively to ensure that the needs of individual students are met and that they can learn in a safe and secure environment. Parents and students value the leadership team's focus on girls' personal development and the care that is provided, managed by excellent pastoral leaders. The governors provide good support and challenge and there is excellent promotion of equal opportunities and community cohesion.

Teaching and learning are good overall but there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Students behave well, have positive attitudes towards their learning and are keen to do well. As a result, there is a calm atmosphere in lessons, built around very positive relationships. Students say that teachers treat them as equal partners in the learning process and are always willing to give them individual support. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of resources, including new technology, to engage and excite their students. Some lessons observed were too teacher-led, with little opportunity for students to work in groups or take responsibility for their own learning. Opportunities to extend the thinking of students through more challenging questioning, or to enable them to assess their own or each other's work, were sometimes missed. Some teaching is well directed at the differing ability levels within a class, providing appropriate challenge for the most able and support for the least able. However, this was not seen in all lessons, as some teachers fail to plan for individual needs. Marking is also inconsistent. The best practice seen gave clear guidance on how girls can improve their work and provided opportunities for them to correct their mistakes and to set their own targets for improvement.

Students are excited by the outstanding curriculum, which is constantly being refined to meet the changing needs of the individual. The wide variety of pathways provided in Key Stage 4 includes an alternative off-site course for targeted students. This has enabled previously disaffected students to achieve success. The applied learning specialism has resulted in vocational courses where students are demonstrating improving results. The modified Key Stage 3 curriculum meets the new statutory requirements and the impact of the specialisms is wide-ranging. Work-related learning is very strong and students are encouraged to use their initiative in promoting business enterprise. An excellent range of enrichment activities enhances the formal curriculum, with very high levels of student involvement.

Outstanding care, guidance and support systems are in place to safeguard students, reflecting the caring ethos of the college. Strong transition arrangements are in place so that new students settle quickly. Students say they feel safe and that there are lots of people to help them. They value the support of teachers and learning mentors, and the excellent multi-agency support for vulnerable students is well co-ordinated by the college. Good attendance is celebrated and rewarded. As a result, attendance levels are improving and most students attend well. A small number of persistently poor attenders and their families receive targeted support. Excellent strategies are in place to support extremely good behaviour and, as a result, exclusions have decreased. The comprehensive procedures for academic guidance ensure that all students know how to achieve their targets. As one student said, 'the college pushes individuals to get the best out of them'. Almost all students go on to further education, training or employment from Year 11, well equipped with the academic and personal skills for their future lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching focuses consistently on raising standards and achievement, particularly in relation to students being given greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Share good practice so that all subject leadership is as good as the best.

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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
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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
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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

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	1
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	1
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

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

14 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Jonathan North Community College, Leicester, LE2 6FU

My colleague and I greatly enjoyed our visit to your college. We were particularly impressed with the welcome you gave us, to learn how proud you are of your college and how much you value the education you receive. You go to a good school. These are our findings.

- Standards in Years 7 to 11 are above average and there are clear signs that you are working hard to improve. The tracking of your progress and your recent examination results show that you are making good progress.
- The college provides outstanding care for you so that you feel safe and well supported. This is enabling you to make outstanding development as young adults. We were impressed by the way you show initiative to celebrate the diverse cultural heritage of your fellow students and promote a healthy environment. You receive excellent guidance so you know what you are aiming for and how to achieve your targets.
- The good teaching you receive ensures you learn well. You told us that you value the relationships you have with teachers and the way that they support you. We think, however, that the college can do more to ensure the quality of teaching is consistently high.
- You told us how much you appreciate the outstanding curriculum that you follow, enhanced by the college's specialisms. You value the exciting range of extra opportunities you are offered.
- The leadership team is working hard to ensure that you continue to improve and that the care and guidance provided will enable you to succeed.

In order to take your learning to new heights, we have asked the college and the subject leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently high. You can help by always working hard and aiming for excellence in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mary Davis

Lead inspector