

Arthur Mellows Village College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110875
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	337594
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1458
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D G McLaren
Headteacher	Mr Mike Sandeman
Date of previous school inspection	0 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and analysed 628 questionnaire responses for parents, 150 questionnaire responses from pupils and 58 questionnaire responses from staff. The team also looked at the data the school had collected about the pupils' progress, and at the school's records of their monitoring of the quality of teaching.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and progress of students in 2009, particularly of those in Key Stage 3 and higher attaining students
- how teachers use assessment to help students improve their work, particularly the extent to which students are involved in checking the effectiveness of their own learning
- the effectiveness of leaders at all levels in monitoring and evaluating areas that are less strong, such as the progress of students in Key Stage 3 and that of higher attaining students.

Information about the school

Arthur Mellows Village College is a much larger than average secondary school. It is popular and many students travel from far afield to attend the school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. Most students are of White British heritage and there are very few from other ethnic backgrounds or whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational need. The school has been a specialist technology college since September 2005. It was many awards, including the Healthy Schools award and Activemark for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Childcare provision is provided on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection report. The headteacher has been in post since September 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Arthur Mellows Village College is an outstanding school that has improved greatly over the past few years. Standards are high and students' achievement is excellent. Many aspects of the students' personal development are outstanding, including the extent to which they develop skills to prepare them for future life. The vast majority of parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. The following comments sum up the views of many, 'Excellent school with staff who clearly want pupils to achieve' and 'Fantastic school. Staff always approachable. It's great to have a 14 year old boy who enjoys going to school and who feels challenged'.

Central to the improved success of the school is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. He has brought together a strong team of leaders with a shared vision and ambition to make the school the best it can be. Standards and achievement have improved significantly, and in particular, some groups of students who were previously underachieving now make good progress. There have been improvements in attendance, in the quality of the curriculum and in the standard of teaching. Leaders at all levels have worked particularly well together to secure these improvements quickly and this has led to better outcomes for students. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and this impacts very well on the excellent progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Achievement in the sixth form is good and sixth formers are excellent role models for the younger students. Governors support and challenge the school extremely well, evaluate rigorously and have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the school to drive improvements.

Teaching is good with some outstanding features. Activities offer a good degree of challenge and assessment is used well to support learning. This has resulted in the now high standards, both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Relationships are excellent and most students are keen to participate and learn. Their behaviour is good and has a very positive effect on learning, with just a very few occasions where some students do not engage with their work as well as they might do. The school tracks the progress of pupils regularly and rigorously, ensuring any underachievement is swiftly identified and tackled. Excellent individual guidance and support mean that any slippage in students' progress is turned around quickly. The curriculum is excellent because it is adapted exceptionally well to meet the needs of all students and enriched by many visits that are especially well linked to the students' learning. For example students' understanding of the First World War was greatly enhanced by a recent visit to the battlefields in Normandy.

Students feel extremely safe in school and have an excellent understanding of what it means to lead a healthy life style. Many students enjoy the responsibility through roles

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such as Sports Leaders, helping to promote sports in local primary schools. Students have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students from different backgrounds get on very well with one another. They are steadily developing their knowledge and understanding of cultures not represented in the school. However, the school recognises that it does not always provide enough first hand experiences for them to learn about different ethnic and religious groups. It is, hence, developing its already strong community cohesion programme to widen its links with schools, nationally and internationally that reflect a different cultural and socio-economic make up to that of its own. The school's technology status impacts well on the students' achievement and personal well-being. Specialist targets have been exceeded and have improved year on year and students' information, communication and technology skills are excellent.

This is a school with a growing reputation for providing high quality education. Students themselves are most positive about the school and describe it as a 'learning community with lots of character'. The fact that the school's accurate self-evaluation has led to so many improvements in such a relatively short time indicates that it has an excellent capacity to improve even further. The school provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for students to learn about other cultures, including those represented in the UK as well as internationally by:
 - Building links with schools in the UK that contrast with the school in terms of the ethnic mix of students
 - Consolidating the link that has been made with a school in Germany and a hospital in Malawi.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Attainment on entry is above average. Students make good progress throughout the school and this continues into the sixth form. Most lessons are well organised and engaging so that students learn well and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson, students consolidated their learning and made excellent progress because of the clear steps to success. It was easy to see how this student involvement results in the attainment of high standards.

Over the last three years standards have improved and have been significantly above the national average with 90% achieving five A* to C grades and more than 70% achieving eight A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2009. The number achieving five A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2009 rose to 63%, a significant improvement on the previous year. The school is not complacent and sets very challenging targets for all students. Inspectors saw this in lessons where high expectations were reinforced by teaching staff and interesting work motivated the majority of students. Well-targeted support and guidance in lessons helps students with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities to make excellent progress.

Students are in no doubt that they feel safe in school. They have an excellent understanding of what it means to be healthy. The vast majority choose to eat in the new dining hall where they appreciate the high standard of food provided. They enjoy the many opportunities to take part in sporting activities and clubs. A high number of students in Years 10 to 13 contribute well to the local community through their involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards This is something that the school is recognised for, but there are fewer opportunities for younger students to participate in such activities. Well-structured careers guidance, coupled with an extensive work-related learning programme from Years 7 to 13, helps students develop skills in business and enterprise. First-hand experiences with visiting speakers give students a good base from which to determine their future choices. Combined with high attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), students leave school with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue university courses, employment or training opportunities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Good and outstanding teaching is characterised by interesting activities, good pace and good questioning that challenges students well. Good use is made of discussion to generate ideas as a precursor to independent work. Thorough assessment is evident in nearly all lessons. Teachers' marking is usually clear and helpful; students have individual targets in each subject and most know how they can improve their work. Very occasionally, in lessons where learning is less secure, teachers talk too much from the front of the class, giving pupils less opportunity to be involved in their own learning. In some lessons teachers do not give clear criteria by which students can tell how well they are learning. In these lessons, learning and progress slows.

The curriculum is tailored exceptionally well to meet the needs of all learners. 'Bonus' sessions in English, mathematics and science in Year 9 have been instrumental in raising attainment. The flexibility of the option choices in Years 10 and 11 allows for students of all abilities to specialise, whilst retaining breadth and balance in their options. The school is about to become the lead school for the new Diploma in manufacturing, widening its suite of vocational subjects and linking well to local industries. A bespoke programme for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to achieve highly and to be fully involved in school life. The specialist school status ensures enhanced opportunities in technology and has a considerable impact on improving achievement, particularly in science. A broad range of extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum and participation rates are high. Students welcome the chance to sample some unusual activities, such as learning Mandarin and being involved in the 'Toyota car challenge'.

Staff work very effectively as a team successfully creating an outstanding network of care, guidance and support for the students at Arthur Mellows. This permeates all years, even before students begin in Year 7. Well-established links with a very wide range of specialist agencies mean that advice and guidance are deployed diligently in guiding individuals and groups, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk. Support for the very few students who are learning English as an additional language is carefully planned enabling them to progress well in lessons. Inspectors agree with the students about the exceptional care provided in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has provided the school with a very clear vision and direction that has

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had a very significant and positive impact on its development. He has re-organised staffing and made some very good appointments that are resulting in many significant improvements. The whole staff shares a clear commitment to raising standards. Team spirit is robust and everyone's contribution is valued. The school clearly knows its strengths very well and what to do to improve academic achievement. Monitoring and evaluation, including of the impact of community cohesion, are meticulous at all levels. Any previous gaps in performance, such as those of the highest attaining students have closed rapidly. This, along with the cohesive and harmonious nature of the school community, indicates that equality of opportunity is outstanding. The needs of the students remain at the heart of everything the school does. Procedures for safeguarding are very comprehensive. Engagement with parents is good, drawing together views from formal presentations, open evenings and informal communications at school events. Inspectors were impressed with the organisation and effectiveness of the school's Academic Day that took place during the inspection. The school is reaching out very well into the local community, and planned links with other communities nationally and internationally are becoming increasingly well established. The school has very effective partnerships with the local authority and is sharing expertise with another school nearby. Governors are extremely well informed and both support and challenge the school highly effectively in its drive towards further improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The vast majority of students in the sixth form reach the challenging targets set for

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them. Standards on entry to the sixth form are broadly average. Students make good progress and reach above average standards because they are well taught. Almost all go on to higher education and the number who do not enter employment, training or further education is extremely low. Numbers entering the sixth form are increasing and attendance is high. Sixth form students are highly articulate and excellent role models for younger students. They contribute very well to the work of the school, through roles such as mentors. This is valued greatly by Year 7 students who say this plays a large part in helping them to settle in. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and students' progress in lessons is good, being supported by the good relationships and attention to their individual needs. The curriculum provides a good range of courses, including those offered through the consortium. However, there is a recognition that this choice needs to be widened to attract a larger percentage of the school's Year 11 students to stay on. Students were keen to tell the inspectors that their tutorial support is well organised and makes a good contribution to their academic progress and personal development. The improving examination results indicate the success of the provision. New leadership of the sixth form demonstrates an accurate view of priorities and a clear agenda for further improvement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are very positive about all aspects of the school's work. Ninety-seven per cent of those who replied agreed that the school keeps their children safe and ninety-four per cent agreed that their children enjoyed school. These features were very clear to the inspectors. A few parents felt that the school did not help them to support their children's learning. Inspectors thought that the school engaged with the parents well, but agreed with the school that they need to expand a little more on the advice they give to parents. A few parents felt that the school does not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. The inspectors felt that this was something that the school did well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Arthur Mellows Village College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 628 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1458 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	204	32	382	61	33	5	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	211	34	393	63	12	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	117	19	411	65	70	11	9	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	154	25	389	62	49	8	3	0
The teaching is good at this school	144	23	427	68	30	5	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	14	409	65	82	13	10	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	92	15	428	68	79	13	7	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	106	17	420	67	41	7	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	125	20	418	67	48	8	9	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	156	25	372	59	49	8	13	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	94	15	387	62	69	11	9	1
The school is led and managed effectively	154	25	420	67	17	3	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	189	30	399	63	25	4	4	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Arthur Mellows Village College, Peterborough, PE6 7JX

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you very much. We judged your school to be outstanding and we would like to share with you why we think this is so.

A key to your outstanding achievement is the good behaviour and attitudes to learning the vast majority of you have. The way you approach your studies means that you are focused in lessons and you enjoy engaging in discussions and presentations which challenge your thinking. We judged teaching as good overall, but we saw some outstanding lessons during our visit where you were fully involved in assessing your own learning. You feel that your headteacher has a high profile around the school and along with other leaders has helped to bring about many improvements, such as raising standards. We agree with you.

You tell us that you feel very safe in school and that there is always someone to turn to when you need help. You told inspectors why you really enjoy your school and we agree that the outstanding curriculum and the very high levels of care, guidance and support you receive are indeed helping you to enjoy developing personal and academic skills for your daily lives. Your understanding of your local community is very good, but that of cultures that reflect the ethnic mix in Britain today is not quite as strong. We have asked the headteacher to find ways of helping you to learn more about people of different backgrounds and cultures, both in the UK and abroad.

Enjoy your time at Arthur Mellows and keep your aspirations high.

Yours sincerely

Alison Thomson

Lead Inspector

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