

# Bassingbourn Village College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110895
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337596
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Brooker HMI

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	676
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	George Lynn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Scott Hudson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	South End Bassingbourn Royston
<b>Telephone number</b>	01763 242344
<b>Fax number</b>	01763 248122
<b>Email address</b>	office@bassingbournvillagecollege.com

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed the college's work, and looked at the most recent results and performance data, self-evaluation documents and school improvement plans, as well as 120 parental questionnaire responses and a large number of questionnaires returned by students and staff. They spent the majority of time in lessons, including 42 part-lesson observations, and observed most of the teachers in the college. Meetings were held with nominated staff, governors and groups of students.

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

- the quality of learning across all subjects and the rates of progress made by all groups of students over time
- the leadership and management of teaching and learning and the impact of college self-evaluation.

## Information about the school

The college is smaller than the average secondary school. It serves a rural area of southwest Cambridgeshire and its popularity has led to growth since its last inspection, including an increasing proportion of students from outside its catchment. Levels of student mobility are higher than average, in part because some parents are stationed at the nearby army barracks and also because some students join the college at times other than the start of Year 7. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion entitled to free school meals is well below the national figure. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or difficulties is higher than average. There are six looked after children. The college has specialisms in technology and applied learning and is the lead member of a Leading Edge partnership. Since the last inspection, there has been significant investment in new sports facilities and the development of an information and communication technology infrastructure within the college.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

Bassingbourn Village College provides a welcoming, friendly and safe environment in which students have good opportunities to develop the essential academic qualifications and personal attributes that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life. Standards of attainment have risen since the last inspection and are well above national figures. Most students enjoy school and a large majority gain at least five good GCSEs by the end of Year 11. However, results at GCSE represent satisfactory rather than good achievement because in most subjects the students make steady rather than rapid progress from their starting points, which are generally quite high. Other personal outcomes for students are good; behaviour is often exemplary and students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a notable strength. The students' positive attitudes make a strong contribution to learning and to the school's good ethos. Students routinely demonstrate responsibility by conducting themselves well, and have a mature approach to their own well-being and that of others; they are thoughtful and express their considered opinions very clearly. The college surveys student views and is developing the role of the student council, but many students are keen to assume more responsibility. The impact of the student voice is underdeveloped.

Pastoral care is structured around a system of colleges and vertical tutor groups which provide good levels of support and care. Despite its size, the college offers students a wide and varied curriculum that meets their individual needs well. It works effectively in partnership with other local providers to offer a wider range of options, particularly in vocational areas of learning. Although teaching is often good or even outstanding, its quality is inconsistent. There are too often weaknesses that limit students' progress and so teaching is satisfactory overall. Assessment information is not consistently well used to present challenging work for the range of different abilities within each teaching group. Although some marking is exemplary, students are sometimes unclear what they need to do to improve either because work is not corrected or because marking provides insufficient guidance.

The improvements secured since the last inspection demonstrate that the college has the capacity to improve further. The improvement plan articulates an ambitious vision for the college's future development, based on clear success criteria and appropriate priorities. The students' high attainment and generally good personal outcomes and the evidence of some excellent teaching demonstrate that the college has the potential to be a good or outstanding school. Leaders and managers embed ambition and drive improvement satisfactorily, but staff do not have consistently high expectations for all students. Self-evaluation is systematic and broadly accurate, but improvement strategies have not galvanised the efforts of all staff to focus sharply on strengthening key

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elements of teaching and assessment. Some outstanding teaching promotes excellent progress, but areas of strength are not widely replicated and ambition and high aspiration for all students are not securely embedded in classroom practice.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the overall quality of learning in order to establish securely good progress for all groups of students by:
  - extending the outstanding features of teaching that already exist
  - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
  - eliminating the most obvious weaknesses and inconsistencies in teaching.
- Strengthen the quality and impact of assessment by:
  - ensuring that marking is effective in guiding improvement
  - making more effective use of assessment information to plan and adapt work and learning activities in lessons to better meet the learning needs of individual students.
- Make more effective use of the students' views in school self-evaluation, in order to strengthen provision and outcomes.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils settle quickly to their work, sustain their concentration well and enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and join discussions. They relish practical activities, especially those that are challenging and involve elements of problem-solving. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable to underachievement benefit from clearly targeted support which, together with effective monitoring, enables them to achieve success. The proportion of students achieving at least five A\*-C grades including English and mathematics increased to 67% in 2009, significantly higher than the national figure. Higher attaining pupils make particularly good progress, but the majority reach the standards expected, given their prior attainment. The satisfactory progress indicated by published data for the last three years is confirmed by school assessment information and the observations of lessons: most students make progress that is broadly in line with their capabilities.

Pupils develop good personal and social skills. Their good behaviour reflects their positive social and moral attitudes and is a notable strength. They feel safe and well cared for, most enjoy healthy lifestyles and respond positively to the opportunities to contribute to the life of the college and the wider community. It is immediately evident from speaking with groups and individuals how well they evaluate and articulate their own development and any shortcomings in provision. Students appreciate what the

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school provides for them and recognise its deficiencies.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and generally make good use of new technology to support learning. Teaching is good in many respects and is sometimes outstandingly effective, but it is too variable, particularly in the quality of planning and use of assessment. In the best lessons, there are high expectations based on rigorous assessment and carefully considered activities. However, for each notable strength there is a concomitant weakness, and this inconsistency undermines the overall quality and effectiveness of teaching. Some classrooms, for example, are welcoming and lively, but in others the old or shabby displays and untidy accommodation do little to create a stimulating environment for learning. Half-termly progress checks ensure that students know how well they are doing in each subject, but marking is not used consistently to guide improvement.

A wide range of enrichment opportunities is enjoyed by the students, including a full range of extra-curricular activities and 'immersive weeks' which give students

<sup>1</sup> 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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opportunities to learn about wider cultural and social issues, such as the 'Rio Carnival' and 'On the Streets'.

The well-being and personal development of students are given suitably high priority, although the effective use of the extensive tutor time varies widely. Staff know students well and promote a positive and caring ethos which gives individuals confidence that there is always an adult to whom they can turn. Arrangements to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well organised. There has been concerted action to improve students' attendance, although it remains broadly average.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Senior leaders, in partnership with the governing body, are motivated to seek further improvement and are effective in focusing the college's priorities. Reliable systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating the college's performance, and suitable plans have been implemented to strengthen areas of weakness and to secure high-quality teaching and assessment. Governors know the school well and review its performance regularly, holding senior staff to account. They have constructive relationships with the staff and show a good level of understanding in their desire to challenge and support the college and to bring about necessary improvement. Significant success has been achieved in eradicating the college's budget deficit.

The college has a suitable range of strategies for promoting community cohesion, based on an informed understanding of the characteristics and needs of its own community, and has evaluated how it might promote community cohesion more strategically.

A range of successful partnerships has been developed to widen the college's provision and broaden the students' experiences. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and well-being. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and effective, and the college knows its students well. The college can point to several instances where it has supported individual students to ensure that they are given equal opportunity to succeed, including potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals. The college has, for example, sought to develop a more proactive and inclusive approach to address some incidents of inappropriate behaviour, rather than having a high number of repeat exclusions.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire are happy, overall, with their child's experience at the college. Parents are particularly positive about the students' enjoyment of college and the fact that they are safe. Most parents agree with the statement that teaching is good, but a significant number also express concerns about specific lessons or inconsistent provision, and some highlight the resulting lack of continuity in their child's progress. Inspection evidence supports the view that there is wide variation in the effectiveness of teaching. Some parents do not think that they are kept well enough informed about their child's progress or how they might effectively support their child's learning; a few feel that behaviour is not good enough. Although the college recognises that communication could be strengthened, inspectors consider that the college's engagement with parents and carers is good. Inspection evidence indicates that student behaviour is generally very good.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bassingbourn 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 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 676 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	30	79	66	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	39	33	76	63	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	33	69	58	11	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	23	79	66	10	8	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	15	13	91	76	12	10	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	10	86	72	19	16	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	14	87	73	11	9	1	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)	30	25	70	58	11	9	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	17	83	69	13	11	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	22	68	57	15	13	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	14	72	60	21	18	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	21	18	79	66	14	12	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	23	78	65	12	10	0	0

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



16 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Bassingbourn Village College, Bassingbourn, SG8 5NJ

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us and the positive contribution that you made to our recent inspection. We were very impressed with your carefully considered opinions and the mature way in which you expressed your views. These, alongside those of your parents, were very helpful in confirming what staff told us about the college, including its good curriculum and the effective care and support that it provides. We were particularly impressed with:

- the fact that you feel very safe and are generally happy at school
- the high standards that you achieve at GCSE
- your good personal development, your good behaviour around the college and in lessons, and your positive attitudes to learning
- and how all this prepares you well for the next stage of your education and for later life.

In some lessons you make excellent progress and achieve really well, particularly when teaching is challenging and carefully planned. Several of you commented that lessons were dull or lacked challenge when they are not planned properly, or when work is not regularly marked. We agree that the quality of your learning is rather variable and think that you could do even better. We have specifically asked the college to:

- increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons to ensure that you make accelerated progress across all subjects
- make better use of assessment and marking to guide your improvement
- listen more carefully to your views and opinions when making decisions about what needs improving.

You can see from this, that you can have an important influence on improving the college. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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