

Grobby Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120270
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339659
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

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	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	922
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Thompson
Headteacher	Caroline Wilkins (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	4 April 2007
School address	Ratby Road Grobby Leicester
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 45 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work, and looked at documentation including: improvement plans, progress tracking records, records of classroom observation, attendance and exclusion data, behaviour logs, monitoring information, minutes of governors' meetings, 59 parental, 144 student and 25 staff questionnaires.

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

- whether learning and progress are good enough across subjects and groups of learners, and the effectiveness of progress tracking
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in judging and improving the quality of lessons
- how well leaders and managers are driving improvement through quality assurance activities and focused action planning
- the college's arrangements for promoting regular attendance and tackling persistent absence
- the accuracy of sixth form self-evaluation.

Information about the school

Groby is a specialist language college. Most students are from White British backgrounds. Indian students form the largest subgroup with a few from a range of other minority ethnic groups. A small minority speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of students identified by the college with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The college makes Key Stage 4 provision in partnership with a local further education college, and shares specialist language status with a high school on the same campus. The college has gained a number of national awards including the International Award, Healthy Schools and Artsmark Gold.

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

Since the previous inspection, above average standards have been maintained in line with students' attainment on entry to the college. This disguises some variation across subjects and groups of learners. The proportion of students gaining five or more high grade passes at GCSE continued to improve. However, when English and mathematics are included, results are variable. In 2008, 64% of students achieved this national benchmark, well above the national average. This dropped by 9% this year as results in mathematics were disappointing, particularly for girls. This is explained by changes to examination requirements, weaknesses in teaching and unsuccessful intervention. Collaboration between the English and mathematics departments has not been sufficient to ensure a secure overview of progress in both subjects; this has now improved. A good improvement was made in the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to G grades.

Challenging targets are set but not consistently achieved. Students are not involved in the target setting process and do not always know how they are progressing. In recent years, students have made less progress than expected in meeting the challenging targets set in Key Stage 4, including students with special educational needs. Differences between subjects and groups can be explained by wide variation in the effectiveness of progress tracking, and the use of assessment information to inform lesson planning. Good progress is made in science, art, drama and graphics. Whole college monitoring of progress is not sufficiently robust to identify underperformance of individuals and groups at an early enough stage. Nevertheless, the college has had some success improving outcomes for target groups identified at the end of Year 10, specifically boys. Effective progress tracking in science has now been shared with middle leaders to improve consistency and impact.

The quality of students' learning experiences vary a great deal from lesson to lesson. Students enjoy lessons where they are challenged and involved in a variety of practical tasks with opportunities to discuss and share their learning. In too many lessons, assessment information is not used consistently well to plan and adjust lessons and tasks to meet students' needs. In a few lessons observed, disruptive behaviour sometimes interfered with the learning of others. Marking of work is variable; better examples provide detailed guidance to support improvement. Students have a good choice of subjects in Key Stage 4, including a range of modern foreign and community languages promoted as part of the specialism. All students are required to study a foreign language, but not all want to do so. Planning to support 14 to 19 progression routes is under-developed in part because the sixth form curriculum is restricted to advanced courses. A few students do not feel fully prepared for future choices.

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Most students enjoy lessons and opportunities to take part in sporting, music and drama activities. Students feel safe in the college and parents and carers agree. During the inspection behaviour was generally satisfactory around the college. Incidences of bullying are rare and dealt with promptly and effectively. Relationships are generally positive. However, exclusions are high and the incidence of misbehaviour is well documented, arising from disruption and a lack of cooperation. In addition, attendance, persistent absence and punctuality are areas identified for attention. The behaviour policy is not consistently applied and students feel that there is not sufficient emphasis on rewards. Students are not always confident that they will be listened to. The student leadership team is willing but involves a very small number. Opportunities to fully represent the 'student voice' are limited.

Leaders are benefiting from partnership links with a language college to share and develop good practice; and external projects to build capacity such as in progress tracking and intervention. Leaders collect evidence through a range of monitoring activities such as classroom observation and work scrutiny to support an evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. This provides a broadly accurate picture. Findings are not rigorously analysed and set against progress information, therefore evaluations are overly generous in most aspects of the college's work, including the sixth form. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation at all levels to improve consistency, and to ensure that good practice is shared and embedded. The capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve behaviour, attendance, punctuality and attitudes to learning by:
 - reviewing and evaluating the impact of the behaviour policy
 - involving students in the review process and future developments
 - evaluating the impact of behaviour and absence on learning and progress
 - reviewing provision at the start of the day to improve punctuality
 - listening to students' concerns and providing feedback on issues raised.
- Ensure systems for monitoring progress enable students to reach challenging targets through:
 - involvement of students in the target setting process
 - regular collection and analysis of progress information for all groups of learners
 - thorough and early identification of students at risk of not meeting their targets and coordinated intervention.
- Achieve consistency and improvement by strengthening planning, monitoring, evaluation and lines of accountability between senior and middle leaders so that:
 - the monitoring of teaching and learning leads to improvement to enhance teaching skills and the sharing of good practice
 - tracking and analysis of progress information is used by all staff to identify

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group and individual learning needs

- all staff have the opportunity to contribute to college evaluations
- the governing body has a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the college to hold leaders to account.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan lessons to take account of prior attainment, assessment information and the learning needs of students
 - use teaching methods that provide interest and challenge for all abilities
 - group students flexibly and extend opportunities for collaboration to challenge passive learning behaviours
 - check students' understanding of their work frequently during lessons in order that plans can be adjusted to meet emerging needs
 - promote high quality presentation and mark work regularly to provide feedback on how students can improve.
- Review the curriculum to provide clear 14 to 19 progression routes to meet the needs and interests of students.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next inspection.

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

Evidence from students' work seen during the inspection indicates that the majority of classes are making at least satisfactory progress, with some making good progress. In most lessons, relationships are positive and supportive. Students are often over dependent on the teacher because learning tasks are not well matched to their needs, and there are not enough opportunities for students to discuss their learning in pairs or groups. In a few lessons, learning is impeded by disruptive behaviour and is a concern to staff and students. Where learning is stronger, students make good progress because they are clear about the purpose of lessons. Students contribute willingly and enjoy collaborative learning and the opportunity to take responsibility. New technologies are used effectively to enrich experiences and stimulate students' interest, for instance through the use of carefully selected video clips.

Other features of student outcomes:

Students understand how to adopt healthy lifestyles and many take part in sporting activities readily. Most know what foods are deemed healthy and the dangers of smoking, drug-taking and alcohol.

Spiritual development opportunities are limited but when an occasion arises, students respond appropriately; there were several examples of good empathy in poetry lessons observed, and highly imaginative, creative responses were seen in art, graphics and textiles lessons.

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Most students know right from wrong and understand the consequences of their actions. When given the opportunity, they are concerned about less advantaged people and respond well to charity fund raising, for example, fund raising for homeless people in Mexico.

Students work well together in groups and teams. Opportunities to gain an understanding of others from different backgrounds and cultures are limited. Cultural development is restricted largely to lessons in the arts, languages and sport, and opportunities within these areas for enrichment by sports fixtures, music and drama presentations.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Effective transition ensures that students, parents and carers are well-informed about life in the college. Vulnerable students are well cared for, carefully tracked and supported. Links with outside agencies such as education welfare provide good support for students absent through illness. The college has worked hard to reduce the number of students persistently absent but leaders recognise that there is more to do to secure

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 rates of attendance. On transfer, there is a range of GCSE subjects available. A small minority of students are identified for a less academic curriculum and entry to a limited range of vocational courses. Student access to information and communication technology, and personal, social and health education are in place in Year 10, and planned to continue into Year 11 to support their development.

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan well structured lessons. The difference between satisfactory and better teaching is dependent on how well teachers use assessment information to plan a variety of interactive tasks to meet students' learning needs. In too many lessons, the same task is set for the whole class.

Questioning techniques are generally good. This is stronger where questions are directed at specific students and when teachers follow up a response to challenge students to justify and explain their answers. Teachers do not consistently adopt strategies to ensure that all students participate in class which allows passive learning behaviour to become the norm, particularly for girls. In lessons affected by disruption, classroom management strategies are not effectively deployed.

Students whose abilities are suited to intermediate or foundation level courses leave at age 16 because there is no provision for them in the sixth form. They receive helpful guidance but many are not aware of the wide range of progression routes from 14 to 19 years.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are ambitious for the college, and committed to improvement. Senior leaders identify entry at 14 years as a barrier to the academic and personal development of students. Although there are suitable links to support transition, curriculum links are not rigorously evaluated to support improvement. This is particularly the case in modern foreign languages as many students do not feel well prepared to meet Key Stage 4 demands.

A review of roles and responsibilities is providing a stronger focus on student progress and developments within teaching. Teaching assistants are deployed more effectively to provide greater continuity for teachers and students. Middle leaders have welcomed recent opportunities to share and adopt good practice, for example, in tracking progress. A number of advanced skills teachers are supporting improvements in teaching. The impact of this work is not sufficiently embedded to reduce the wide

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variation in practice. Improvement plans have appropriate priorities although arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress are not detailed with timelines to enable progress to be carefully checked.

Other features of leadership and management:

Governors are closely involved with developments. They receive regular updates from senior leaders but do not gather first hand evidence to contribute directly to self-evaluation. Progress reports on improvement plans and targets are not sufficiently detailed to enable governors to identify clearly enough where attention is needed.

All safeguarding arrangements are met. Systems to monitor, evaluate and record the effectiveness of the range of safeguarding policies are developing.

Equalities policies are in place and steps taken to tackle gender differences. The impact of these policies is limited due to shortcomings in the analysis of progress information at key assessment points. This means that some inequalities are not picked up at an early enough stage to support prompt intervention.

An audit has been completed with respect to religion, ethnicity and socio-economic background to identify where development is needed to promote community cohesion. Plans are in place to extend opportunities for learners to have greater contact with others living in different contexts to broaden their horizons.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Most students are mature and committed learners. They make a responsible contribution to the college and wider communities, reflecting for many a well-developed

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sense of moral and social responsibility. They are interested in their studies, reflective, and work well independently when given the opportunity. Pass rates at AS and A level are in line with national results, and students make expected progress from their GCSE starting points. There is inconsistency in the performance of different subjects; students regularly achieve well in art and graphics.

Students' learning and progress in lessons are generally satisfactory, and often good, depending on the quality of teaching. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and more teachers expect students to be active learners. Occasionally, teachers still talk for too long and do not always adapt work enough to meet the needs of all learners, especially lower attainers.

Students appreciate the help they receive. Their progress is tracked and regularly reviewed, but there is no systematic monitoring of their use of private study time. Students are aware of their academic targets, and receive helpful support and guidance when choosing courses in higher education or employment. The curriculum is restricted to a good range of AS and A level courses, and additional studies. The International Baccalaureate was introduced this year for a few students. Students have good opportunities to enrich their learning beyond lessons.

Leaders and managers are interested and supportive of students. Improvement planning is not yet rigorous enough in identifying priorities and evaluating them with measurable success criteria to support accurate self-evaluation.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The number of responses from parents was low. Of the parents who responded to the questionnaire, the majority were supportive. A few written responses were very positive about the support provided by the college in meeting the specific needs of their child.

Other written responses focused on two aspects: inconsistency in the quality of teaching and the impact of disruptive behaviour on learning. Inspection evidence confirmed these views and they are featured in the improvement points for the college.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Groby Community 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 922 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	29	38	64	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	14	24	40	68	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	22	38	64	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	15	39	66	7	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	8	38	64	6	10	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	10	33	56	13	22	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	10	41	69	8	14	0	0
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)	19	32	28	47	5	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	15	34	58	8	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	10	30	51	6	10	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	12	30	51	4	7	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	7	12	35	59	4	7	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	24	37	63	3	5	1	2

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.



4 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Groby Community College, Groby LE6 0GE

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your college recently. We enjoyed our discussions with you and seeing you at work. You told us that Groby is a safe place to be. Most of you enjoy good relationships with staff and taking part in sporting, music and drama activities. Sixth form students enjoy their time and benefit from opportunities both to contribute within the college and the wider community.

We decided that Groby is a satisfactory college. Above average standards have been maintained in Key Stage 4 but many of you do not make the progress expected. This is because progress is not always checked carefully enough and steps taken at an early stage to keep you on track. This is not the case in all subjects: you make good progress in science, art and drama. You are all required to study a modern foreign language, as a language college, but not all of you want to. Opportunities for you to have your say, take responsibility and support developments are limited.

Lessons can vary a great deal; there are too many that do not help you to make enough progress. You told us that you enjoyed lessons with plenty of interaction and practical tasks, and opportunities to work in groups. Some lessons are spoilt by disruptive behaviour and this interferes with the learning of others. This is a concern to many of you and your teachers. You told us that the behaviour policy was not working very well and there are not enough rewards. Attendance and punctuality are also a concern as they affect your progress.

Staff are working hard to make improvements, and working with others to support your achievements. At the end of the inspection, we identified some improvement points:

- improve behaviour, attendance, punctuality and attitudes to learning, and involve you in the process
- strengthen systems for checking your progress and keeping you on track to reach challenging targets
- for all leaders to work closely together to check on the quality of lessons, and the use of assessment information to support your progress
- increase the number of good lessons that are planned to interest, challenge and engage you

- review the curriculum to provide clear progression routes from 14 to 19 to meet your needs.

You can play your part by attending regularly and on time. Get involved in opportunities to help the college make improvements.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic

Her Majesty's Inspector

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