

# Ambergate Sports College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120746
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	339762
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Trevor Watts

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Cook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Bell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Dysart Road Grantham NG31 7LP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01476 564957
<b>Fax number</b>	01476 542 880
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:peter.bell@ambergatesportscollege.co.uk">peter.bell@ambergatesportscollege.co.uk</a>

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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 two additional inspectors. About 60% of the time available was spent observing learning. Fifteen lessons were seen, involving 14 different teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and members of staff. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, records of pupils' progress as well as many policies and other records. Twenty eight questionnaires were received from parents, representing a quarter of all the parents. Questionnaire returns were also received from pupils and staff.

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

- the rate of progress of different groups of pupils in different key stages throughout the school
- the impact of the relatively new status as a Sports College
- the effectiveness of the leadership team which has experienced recent changes.

## Information about the school

This is a relatively small school that is primarily for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, but which has an increasing number of pupils with other needs. These include autism, complex learning needs and behavioural difficulties for which some pupils have been excluded from other schools. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are only two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school gained Sports College status in 2008 and now uses teaching areas within the nearby leisure centre and the adjacent primary school. Almost all pupils are White British and a small number are in the care of their local authority. The headteacher is currently dividing his time managing this school and another one. The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are both relatively new to their posts.

**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?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It has rapidly developed excellent features since becoming a Sports College with a superb array of regular and adventurous pursuits. These range from cheerleading to kayaking, involving Ambergate's own pupils and those of many local schools. The motivation to succeed arising from Sports College status has spread throughout the staff and pupils in all subjects and at all levels. The outstanding curriculum is not only reflected in the excellent learning opportunities in sport, but also in the many academic, vocational and practical courses available to pupils leading to nationally recognised qualifications. These complement the activities for the less able pupils who are learning to become more independent and developing their social skills. Pupils' learning is good. They achieve well because the teaching is good and their activities are usually well chosen for their needs and rate of learning. Occasionally, however, lesson targets and activities are not always well based on what is known of pupils' abilities and needs. This results in pupils sometimes becoming restless and not learning as well as they might. Where pupils are working towards their own individual targets, their progress is not always clear over the longer term because the targets are sometimes too difficult or vague to attain. Older pupils make good progress in the wide range of examination courses available to them, which is a strength of the effective curriculum. Pupils are exceptionally well looked after and cared for. Child protection procedures are thorough and well known to all staff and governors.

School leaders work extremely well as a team with staff and governors. The drive and ambition of senior staff has been infectious; they command the support and respect of staff and their self-evaluation is mostly very accurate. In the relatively short time that the school has enjoyed Sports College status, leaders have amply demonstrated their ambition to fulfil their realistic but challenging plans. Leaders are continuing to improve the school beyond the specialist sports status, with major developments in information and communication technology (ICT), food technology and the arts. Leaders have consistently monitored these accomplishments and use their findings to refine the next stages of development. The governors are developing their proactive skills by undertaking the 'Governor Mark' training, which includes systematically holding the school to account for its work. These strong aspect of leadership and management reinforce the school's good capacity to continue improving.

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

- By the beginning of the next academic year, ensure consistency in pupils' learning by:

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- setting challenging and achievable targets in lessons, and making sure that the lesson activities are closely matched to pupils' different learning needs
- setting realistic and measureable targets for pupils to achieve in the longer term.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their learning in lessons is good, particularly when the teaching is brisk or involves practical activities. They enter the school at various stages of their educational careers. Those who are admitted at a very young age often have severe and complex learning difficulties while some who are admitted later in the school may have varying degrees of autism or challenging behaviour. Pupils, including the small number of girls, those in the care of their local authority and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good progress throughout the school because the teaching and the curriculum are increasingly well adapted to their needs. In lessons seen, pupils, of all abilities made good progress. Occasionally, lesson targets and activities were not always well matched to pupils' abilities and needs. This results in pupils sometimes becoming restless and not learning as well as they might. Where pupils are working towards their own individual targets, their progress is not always clear because the targets are sometimes too difficult or vague to attain.

For some pupils the good progress is seen in their increasing confidence with their peers or their ability to speak clearly. For others, it is reflected in the ability to control their behaviour and to cooperate with adults in lessons. They mostly pay attention very well and are interested in their work. Older pupils make good progress in the number of qualifications that they gain, such as full GCSE and Entry Level passes. They also gain valuable qualifications through the Award Scheme Development and Assessment Network (ASDAN), City and Guilds, BTEC, the National Open College Network (NOCN) and the Adult Learning Network Action Group (ALAN). Pupils with differing abilities and interests achieve well in various combinations of the courses available. At the appropriate age, all have an experience of work which sometimes leads to paid employment when they leave school. Pupils' success in sports activities are outstanding, whether in regular team games, adventurous pursuits or residential activities.

Pupils enjoy their learning, whether in classrooms, outdoors or in the sports arenas. They say they feel very safe and secure in school and have never experienced any form of bullying. They have an outstanding awareness of various dangers that could be around them, such as on the internet, on the roads, with drugs or alcohol or unhealthy forms of food. They know who to go to if they are worried, and are confident that they would get help promptly. Pupils' behaviour is good, although some can become restless on a few occasions. The great majority not only understand the need for a healthy lifestyle, but they willingly eat and drink healthily and enthusiastically take part in innumerable sporting and physical activities. They accept responsibility willingly, and take many opportunities to help each other in school, such as being play buddies, setting out equipment or being on the very active school council. Their dynamic

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involvement in local community events and their fund-raising for causes across the world are regular and involve virtually all pupils. As well as learning good basic skills, pupils enhance their future prospects by learning how to behave in the workplace, to be punctual and well-dressed, to follow instructions, to fill in forms or use computers. Pupils' attendance is good when considering the unavoidable medical absences of a small number of pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because of the whole welcoming family ethos of the school. This includes 'circle' times for personal discussions and regular 'Diversity Days' to learn about the lives of others. Outdoor pursuits activities such as rock climbing build pupils' self-esteem, and develop strong social skills such as teamwork and leadership. Pupils said 'It is fantastic when we got to the top.'

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

<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.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and mainly plan their lessons carefully. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection varied from satisfactory to outstanding, with the great majority being good. Teachers understand their pupils' needs well and share good relationships with them. They regularly and frequently check how well pupils are making progress, and pupils mostly know what their targets are for each term or year. The targets are referred to by teachers in lessons, but they are sometimes too broad to be achievable in the expected time, or the activities do not provide the right level of challenge to achieve them. Pupils' good learning in lessons is aided by the imaginative use of a wide variety of equipment from computers to canoes. Classroom support staff are not only competent and knowledgeable, but they are also well deployed to help the learning of individuals and small groups of pupils.

Sports College status has given a powerful incentive to pupils to try harder and to succeed in other areas of the curriculum. A huge range of physical activities is on offer each week with, for instance, more than 20 residential events organised for the summer term each year. All groups of pupils have good access to a very wide range of activities within the outstanding curriculum that are tailored to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Activities include, for instance, independence training, vocational courses (including construction, child care and catering at a nearby college) and work experiences, as well as the numerous subjects in which pupils gain national qualifications at levels appropriate to their abilities and interests. Pupils with autism develop their communication and social skills very well through the use of symbols, signing, work areas with few distractions, and well managed activities in pairs or small groups of other pupils. Other enrichments include many trips out of school, visitors coming into school, a popular breakfast club, and numerous after-school clubs.

The outstanding care, guidance and support that pupils receive is founded in extremely thorough procedures that are understood and followed by all staff and pupils. Statutory requirements and guidelines for ensuring the health, protection and safety of all pupils including those from the most vulnerable circumstances are fully met. For example, high levels of supervision of pupils and thorough vetting of staff and visitors to ensure they are suitable persons to be in school are implemented rigorously. Training for staff and governors in child protection, is comprehensive and up to date. The work of outside agencies such as therapists and health professionals is extremely valuable and has a particularly positive impact on pupils well-being and personal development

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The school is led and managed with perception, energy and enthusiasm by a headteacher who has very strong drive and ambition for school improvement. The management team is bringing a great sense of teamwork, drive and new ideas and methods to the school. Leaders have been very adept at ensuring that all pupils have full and equal access to a great many learning opportunities across the curriculum. Governors are effective in their support for school developments. They monitor the effectiveness of initiatives that are taken and hold the school to account for them. Some governors are regularly involved in many school initiatives and events. Parents and carers are involved as much as possible through home visits, school events, meetings, conferences, open days and visits to places of interest with their children's classes. Their views are always taken seriously and acted upon. Partnerships with other establishments and agencies are enormously effective in broadening, enriching and motivating pupils' learning. These include strong links with schools in the sports cluster, the nearby leisure centre, riding groups, theatre groups, army cadets and the Connexions Partnership. Thorough adherence to safeguarding procedures has been highly effective in ensuring pupils' safety and well being. School leaders actively promote the concept of the school as a community, through the school council, which has a parent governor as a member. Leaders also promote purposeful and wide-ranging involvement in the wider community, creating a great sense of togetherness. Community activities involve almost all pupils and they include events such as the 'Help a Hero' campaign, an exchange period with a German school, holding tea mornings for a local home for the elderly and tidying gardens in the neighbourhood.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

These children share a class with slightly older pupils with very similar complex learning needs. They are very well integrated in the class. They make good progress in lessons and achieve well. Staff know their children and their needs well and make every effort to ensure that they receive a full range of well-tailored and suitable learning opportunities both indoors and in the outdoor play area. This stage of education is well led and managed so that the learning and welfare requirements are met.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The great majority of those who returned the questionnaires were extremely positive about all aspects of the school. Only one parent had more than one negative opinion to convey, but did not explain the reasons. There was no question which aroused any shared negative thoughts. Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views, and did not find any evidence to support the areas of concern. The positive views were by far the most common, such as, 'staff are so supportive', 'A fab school with great staff', 'I can't praise this school and its staff enough' and 'I am so proud of how much progress my son has made.' School surveys and regular contact with homes indicate that this is the overwhelming view.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ambergate Sports 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 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	68	8	29	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	71	8	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	54	12	43	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	61	11	39	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	68	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	50	12	43	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	61	9	32	0	0	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)	18	64	8	29	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	57	9	32	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	71	7	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	71	8	29	0	0	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.**



10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ambergate Sports College, Grantham, NG31 7LP

I am sure that most of you will remember when the inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so polite, friendly and helping us with our questions and with finding our way round.

We found that your school does many things well. You learn at a good pace in most lessons. You told us that you enjoy almost all of them, and like your teachers and teaching assistants. Some lessons are very practical, exciting or adventurous and you said that you enjoy these particularly. Teachers treat you with friendly respect, and you do the same with them. You have many subjects that you can learn. You enjoy many different sports activities; the oldest among you have a great selection of subjects where you can achieve a national qualification or award. You can also have work experience, learn how to use computers very ably and develop your skills in art. Teachers have a very clear idea of how well you are making progress. You are very well looked after and you stay safe. The headteacher, his team and all the staff and governors work very well together to try to make sure that you get the best out of the school.

We would like teachers to plan some of their lessons a little differently so that the activities are not too easy or too difficult for you. You mostly have a good idea what your long-term targets are, but we are asking the school to make them clearer and easier to measure so that it is possible for you to meet them within a reasonable time.

Keep trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector

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