

George Spencer Foundation School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122903
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	340237
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Richard Marsden

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	1351
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gillian Baggley
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Jowett
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
School address	Arthur Mee Road Stapleford Nottingham
Telephone number	0115 9170100
Fax number	0115 9170101
Email address	sjowett@george-spencer.notts.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Inspection number	340237

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

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

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They held meetings with parents, groups of pupils, governors, and staff, and they observed 40 teachers in 40 different lessons. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation on safeguarding, students' attainment and progress, the curriculum, and leadership and management. They also scrutinised 357 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- whether current students are maintaining/exceeding the high standards of recent years
- whether the school's distinctive and innovative curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students
- why, in the school's view, the sixth form is not as effective as the main school.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals. Very few students are learning English as an additional language.

The school has specialist Technology College, Training School and Leading Edge status. It has received many prestigious awards and accolades, including the three top awards from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. It has special accreditation from the Department of Children, Schools and Families to support other schools in their quest for excellence.

The sixth form is known as 'George Spencer 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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for its students. Attainment over recent years has been very high, and the rapid progress of current students shows that these standards are being maintained. Leaders show an exceptionally high level of ambition, drive and commitment to improvement. Teamwork is strong, and all aspects of the school's work are subject to rigorous, ongoing evaluation, which is highly accurate, in the relentless quest for excellence. The school's capacity to improve further is, therefore, outstanding.

Despite the huge amounts of analytical data which the school uses to identify areas for improvement, students are far from being reduced to mere statistics. Students are known exceptionally well as individuals, and there is warmth and humour in the relationships between students and adults. The school ensures that they have many and varied opportunities for extra-curricular activities, and places a strong emphasis on 'active citizenship'. Students' personal development is outstanding. They speak confidently and articulately about current affairs, and are extremely well prepared for the working world, and to take their place as global citizens. Students' excellent behaviour contributes extremely well to their positive attitudes to learning.

The school has developed a distinctive and innovative curriculum. It is highly successful in developing students' 'resilience, resourcefulness and reflectiveness' in the 'rPhase' (years 7 and 8), and in developing their 'independence' in the 'iPhase' (years 9, 10 and 11). The school uses its technology college specialism very well to enhance students' learning and standards in its specialist subjects are high.

In the sixth form students' progress, though good, is not as good as in the main school, and the curriculum does not offer a broad range of vocational courses. Leaders are aware of what needs to be done and have begun an ambitious programme of improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the sixth form by
 - ensuring that students' progress is as rapid as in the main school
 - broadening the curriculum so that it offers greater flexibility.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with attainment which is above average. They progress

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

exceptionally well and by the end of year 11 attainment is high in English, mathematics and science. It is high in most other subjects too, with slight variations year by year. The school meets or exceeds ambitious targets in its specialist technology subjects. In lessons, students concentrate very well. Activities are very well sequenced and students have regular opportunities to reflect on how to improve. Consequently they make exceptionally rapid progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well targeted support and, as a result, they too make exceptionally good progress. There is no significant variation in the progress of other groups.

Students say readily how much they enjoy school. 'We are part of something special here', said one. They speak confidently about how safe they feel in school and point to ways in which the school helps them to pursue a healthy lifestyle. Large numbers are involved in out-of-school sport, and many cycle or walk to school. Students have a detailed awareness of the dangers of drug abuse, and the benefits of a healthy diet.

Students enjoy many and varied opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to their school and the wider community and to develop their role as active citizens. There is student representation at governors' meetings, for example, and students are involved in policy development, such as the new technologies policy. The school collaborates with an enormous number of partners, locally, nationally and internationally, to promote students' personal development and to expose them to the realities of the working world and equip them most effectively to take their place within it.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is also outstanding. They appreciate their many opportunities to explore and reflect upon issues of concern, and they show a good appreciation of different viewpoints and of different cultures within Britain and overseas. Relationships between students and between students and adults are relaxed and display deep levels of mutual respect.

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	1
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	1

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

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

The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is exceptionally high, particularly in years 10 and 11 where the majority of teaching observed was outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and draw on a wide range of techniques to ensure that students learn rapidly and thoroughly, and enjoy their learning. They scrutinise assessment information so that they can target the students' weaker areas with precision, and are relentless in supporting 'borderline' students. 'We are never allowed to let up', as one student put it.

The school's distinctive curriculum incorporates many single year courses and provides extremely well for the needs of individual students. They focus on specific core subjects and sit GCSEs (or equivalent qualifications) in each of Years 9, 10 and 11, for example technology in Year 10, science in Year 11. Students may also take advanced level courses in Year 11. This leads to high levels of motivation and promotes outstanding progress. By the end of Year 9 almost all students have gained a GCSE (equivalent) qualification in information and communication technology, reflecting the school's technology specialism. Regular 'Challenge Days' which focus on innovative and exciting real-life scenarios, are highly rated by students. The school provides an impressive range of out-of-school activities, including competitive sport at which the school excels, many other sporting, artistic and creative pursuits, visits abroad, community and charity work. Participation rates are very high.

The school is friendly and welcoming and provides a caring and supportive environment. Its work with students facing challenging circumstances is exemplary. They are supported vigorously, and the school can point to students whose chances in life have been turned around by the school's intervention. Links with feeder schools are excellent, and new students settle in quickly. Students also receive high quality guidance about future pathways as they move up the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels show an outstanding commitment to ongoing improvement, which is embedded into the day-to day life of the school. Every aspect of the school's work is subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation. As soon as an area for improvement is identified, plans are put in place to tackle it. In 2008 girls' results in mathematics were not quite as high as boys', but the school was very quick to analyse the reasons why, and to take decisive action, which led to improvement the following year.

Teachers receive exceptionally high levels of support as they seek to improve their skills and effectiveness. The school is recognised by the Department for Children, Schools and Families as a provider of employment based initial teacher training, and is able to confer qualified teacher status on successful trainees.

Governors are highly skilled and extremely well informed. They are very closely involved in the life of the school and offer robust challenge to leaders for the benefit of the students. The school has an unusually broad range of partners in Britain and abroad with whom it collaborates to improve provision for the benefit of students. It takes a leading role in sharing good practice both at home and overseas.

The school engages exceptionally well with parents and carers. They are given regular and detailed information about their child's progress and receive guidance about ways in which they can support their child's learning. The school is tireless in its efforts to win over families who find it hard to engage with education.

Equality of opportunity for all is at the heart of the school's work. Students explain in glowing terms how it ensures that there is no discrimination and no-one is left out. Procedures for the safeguarding of students are regularly and robustly reviewed. The school's conscientious approach exceeds statutory requirements.

The school is a harmonious community, and goes to great lengths to promote harmony in the wider community, both nationally and internationally. It evaluates its work in this area very carefully and plans meticulously to ensure maximum impact.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

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

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students at George Spencer College progress well and reach standards which are above expectations in relation to their starting points. There is no significant variation in the attainment and progress of different groups. Some aspects of students' personal development are outstanding, notably their contribution to the school and wider community, and their development of workplace skills.

Teaching is good with some elements outstanding. High quality intervention is provided for underachievers or for students who are having difficulties.

The college provides almost exclusively academic A-level courses, although plans are well advanced to extend the range of vocational subjects. Students feel that the curriculum suits their needs well. The college offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which have recently included projects in Mexico and Argentina.

The sixth form is well led and managed. All aspects are kept under review, and ambitious plans are drawn up to build on strengths and tackle perceived weaknesses. Steps have been taken towards making the curriculum more flexible, for example, and the progress of students in some subjects, where it is not as rapid as in the main school, has also become a focus of attention. Staff work well as a team as they strive for such improvements.

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

Questionnaires were received from 357 parents and carers. A very small minority expressed concern about the way the school deals with behaviour, so inspectors made this a special focus on the second day of the inspection. Almost without exception, they found students' behaviour to be outstanding, particularly amongst older students. In

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

discussion students said that the school handles very swiftly and effectively any incidences of poor behaviour. Parents' and carers' questionnaires show very high levels of satisfaction with the school. One comment was typical of many: 'I have every confidence in the school, teachers and management, and feel my child will have the best possible education and care'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at George Spencer Foundation School and Technology 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 357 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1351 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	28	231	65	17	5	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	142	40	201	56	11	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	174	49	170	48	9	3	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	148	41	184	52	21	6	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	123	34	212	59	11	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	96	27	221	62	27	8	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	20	244	68	31	9	2	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)	112	31	198	55	18	5	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	115	32	209	59	18	5	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	101	28	200	56	27	8	12	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	24	212	59	36	10	9	3
The school is led and managed effectively	116	32	207	58	13	4	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	146	41	183	51	21	6	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



29 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of George Spencer Foundation School and Technology College, Nottingham, NG9 7EW

Many thanks for the warm welcome which you gave to inspectors when we visited your school. We would particularly like to thank those of you who gave us your views, either in meetings or when we spoke to you around the school. Here is what we found:

- your school is outstanding and gives you a very high standard of education. Your teachers work very hard to help you achieve the best possible standards in your work and personal development
- the school is warm and friendly and there is a strong emphasis on providing equal opportunities for every one of you
- lessons are of a very high standard because teachers plan activities which motivate you and help you to progress rapidly. You concentrate and behave very well in lessons and you act upon the advice you receive about how to improve
- your school offers you an outstanding range of out-of-school activities and prepares you very well to take your place as global citizens.

To make your school better still we have suggested that the sixth form be improved further so that it too becomes outstanding, like the rest of the school. We have asked teachers to offer a wider choice of sixth form subjects, and to ensure that sixth form students make even better progress.

You can be proud to attend an outstanding school where everyone wants the best for you.

Best wishes to all of you for the future.

Yours sincerely

Richard Marsden

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.