

Ellesmere College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130371
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	341036
Inspection dates	23-24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sian Margetts
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Large
Date of previous school inspection	February 2007
School address	Ellesmere Road Leicester LE31BE
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Age group	11-19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, records of special school improvement partner visits, students' work and the sports college self-review document. They scrutinised 85 parental questionnaires, 57 staff and 170 pupil questionnaires.

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

- the achievement of different groups of students, at the end of Year 11 and when they leave the school, to determine whether they are achieving their maximum potential and whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- the curriculum; to determine whether it is sufficiently focused on the acquisition of basic skills and social skills and whether the time allocation is appropriate.

Information about the school

Ellesmere College is a special school which caters for students with moderate learning difficulties from across the city of Leicester. Very few individual students have a single, moderate-level difficulty. Most have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. All students have a statement of special educational needs.

Around 55 students come from families where the home language is not English. Among these, 17 different languages are spoken. Around 30 students require some form of support to learn English and 16 students are in the early phases of language acquisition. A very few students with significant hearing impairment are learning British Sign Language. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is over double the national average. Currently, 16 students are looked-after under various arrangements, including a small number who have respite care.

Ellesmere College became a specialist sports college in 2006 and has achieved Sports Mark, Healthy Schools status, Inclusion Quality Mark, Investors in People, Eco-Management Audit System, Career Mark and the Financial Management in School award. Ellesmere College is a Leading Edge Partnership Programme School and is affiliated to the Youth Sport Trust and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

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

3

Main findings

This is an effective school which has built a calm and harmonious working community. Specialist college status has improved progress in physical education and has enhanced provision in the curriculum so that all students do at least two hours physical activity a week and there are many extra opportunities for further sport and coaching provided through local partnerships which compensate for the lack of sports facilities at the college.

Students have positive attitudes to learning; they enjoy their work, behave well and make good progress in developing social skills and self-confidence. Students make good progress, particularly in mathematics, physical education and practical subjects where students enjoy making a variety of things. Students are successful in a wide range of external examinations. The quality of teaching is good overall and staff are committed and dedicated. Teachers form productive relationships with students and manage behaviour well. Effective use is made of skilled teaching assistants to give individual attention where needed. In a minority of lessons observed students were not given sufficiently challenging work and the pace of learning was too slow. The college has carried out some monitoring of teaching, but has not systematically recorded the results so that the information collected could be used effectively to support weaker teachers and share good practice. Good levels of support and care are evident. The curriculum has good features such as the link scheme whereby students in difficulty in mainstream schools can benefit from some time at the college, and the transition scheme in the sixth form where students spend two days at school and three days a week at the local college. However, too much time is spent in tutorials and literacy sessions which do not always push learning forward, and too little time is allocated to developing information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The college gathers a wealth of data about the progress made by individual students but has been slow in collating and analysing this data so it can be used to make useful comparisons with national benchmarks and to help inform its planning for the future. The college does not evaluate its work effectively and, as a result there is no cogent strategy for improvement. Although the college makes a contribution to community cohesion, especially through its sports college work, it does not, as a whole school plan for or evaluate this. Effectiveness had declined since the previous inspection judgement of outstanding in 2007 and several senior members of staff have left the college. For these reasons the college's capacity for improvement is limited.

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The sixth form is satisfactory and all students go on to positive destinations. However, sixth formers spend too much time engaged in option courses, which although enjoyable are not sufficiently challenging.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by implementing comprehensive and rigorous self-evaluation, collating and analysing all relevant data and using these to plan for school improvement and community cohesion.
- Implement systematic monitoring of teaching and use the results of this to improve pace and challenge in all lessons
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by ensuring the option choices are consistently challenging, have clear learning objectives and outcomes and prepare students well for independent living.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

- Attainment is ungraded because of the nature of the students' learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Students enjoy their lessons. They concentrate well and are keen to learn. They like and respect their teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, from starting points which are well below average, they make good progress. Students make good progress in lessons and achieve a variety of qualifications such as entry level certificates, vocational qualifications and GCSEs. Achievement in physical education, measured using the nationally recognised levels of learning for special schools (P levels), shows progress exceeds that in other subjects and is outstanding for many students.
- Students who are falling behind in their work are quickly identified and given extra support, but students in the middle band of ability are sometimes overlooked and not always given the level of challenge they require.
- The school has not consistently analysed the progress made by pupils from different groups since 2006. In the lessons inspectors observed, there was little difference between the achievement of different groups. Students with particular needs such as language difficulties, hearing or visual impairment are well supported and, as a result, make similar progress to their peers.
- Most students say that they feel safe in school. They feel that on the occasions that bullying occurs, it is swiftly and effectively dealt with, and that if they had a problem they would seek help from a teacher. They behave safely around the school, and show a good understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation.
- Students behave well. Their willingness to listen and follow instructions results

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in good concentration and learning in lessons. They get on well with each other and adults so that the school runs safely and harmoniously.

- Because of the good provision for personal development students understand how to adopt healthy lifestyles. They enthusiastically take part in the wide range of physical activities on offer as a result of the specialist sports college status. They are increasingly choosing healthy options in the dining room and they have a good understanding about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They play a full part in the daily life of the school. They willingly take on responsibilities, for example, by greeting and escorting visitors around the school and they welcome the local community to events such as the summer fayre. Some students support local primary schools as young sports leaders.
- Students have a well developed understanding of right and wrong. They care for each other and have a good understanding of other cultures. Their spiritual awareness is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

- Teachers know pupils very well and have good behaviour management skills which they apply consistently. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well with the minimum amount of disruption for other pupils.

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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- Every effort is made to ensure that lessons are exciting and fun. However, this sometimes means that students are engaged in tasks which are too low level and not appropriate to their age, such as colouring in pictures. Teachers are greatly supported in their work by well trained and skilful teaching assistants.
- Students' progress is regularly assessed but the results of assessment are not always used consistently to plan future learning.
- All students participate in daily literacy lessons. These together with tutor time make up about a quarter of the timetable, but they are not always well used. In addition, insufficient time is allocated to ICT. Good initiatives, such as an innovative reading programme, have increased the rate of progress for students in reading.
- In Years 10 and 11 the good range of vocational and academic courses meets the needs of students. The citizenship and personal development programme, which includes careers and personal finance, contributes successfully to students' understanding of responsible citizenship, careers pathways and finance. This is further enhanced by good partnerships, for example, with the Connexions service and local colleges. Links with local businesses support valuable work experience opportunities for all students.
- A wide range of enrichment activities complements the curriculum providing good opportunities for students to contribute to the community. Students of all ages and abilities take advantage of the various sporting activities and visits. These activities make an important contribution to their personal development.
- Students receive good care and support through a range of interlocking provision. Thorough procedures for identifying and addressing particular concerns include weekly information meetings and monthly multi-agency meetings. Pastoral support plans are valuable in planning and co-ordinating support for students who are having problems. The school works closely and productively with other agencies, including the Education Welfare Service, which ensures that attendance is closely monitored and that measures to promote better attendance and punctuality are well-targeted and increasingly effective. Students speak well of the transition from other schools, and they are given good guidance on their next steps after school. Each individual student has targets to achieve, but these targets are not always considered by teachers when the next steps in learning are planned.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

- The school has been effective in achieving good outcomes for students. However, it does not systematically evaluate its work and has not, as yet, produced a coherent plan for further development. Teaching and learning is monitored, but data is not effectively recorded and analysed to identify appropriate training needs.
- Governance of the school is satisfactory. Vacancies on the governing body, in particular for parent governors, have meant that its work is concentrated in the hands of a few. The very recently elected chair has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to move the school forward.
- There is a well established, wide range of partnerships which significantly enhances opportunities and support for students.
- There is a clear policy to promote equality of opportunity for all students and the college has a good understanding of their individual needs. However, it does not monitor and evaluate the progress of different groups of students.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective, and meet legal requirements. Most students feel safe in college, and the college works very effectively with other agencies to promote their safety and well-being. Concerns about individual students are followed up promptly and effectively, partly as a result of there being clear roles and responsibilities for child protection.
- Although the college does much good work to promote community cohesion, for example, the 'drop in' active sports programme, it does not plan for or evaluate the contribution it makes.
- The outcomes for students and financial management are good, representing good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Sixth form

Students make good progress in the sixth form and many achieve external accreditation in a range of examinations and grow in maturity and confidence. They are provided with good personal support and useful opportunities to sample different jobs and visit local colleges. There are no students who do not go onto further education, employment or training due to good quality careers education and preparation for work courses. A strong feature is the transition course where students are able to spend part of the week at Ellesmere College and part at the local college, thus easing the move away. During the week there are four option blocks where students are provided with a wide range of activities. Although enjoyable, these often lack clear learning objectives and measurable learning outcomes and are not sufficiently challenging to fully engage students in mastering more advanced skills. The new head of sixth plans to remedy this situation and to collate and analyse data so that the value of different courses can be demonstrated.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	2
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 overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children enjoy school and that they are well cared-for and safe. Inspectors' observations support these views. As one parent writes, 'Since starting at Ellesmere College my son has thrived. He has gained a lot of confidence and self-esteem. He is happy and fulfilled and this is all due to the positive, caring attitude and patience that Ellesmere College staff provide'. A small minority of parents express concern about behaviour at the school but inspectors saw no evidence of poor behaviour. A few parents feel that they are not well enough informed about the progress their children are making and they are not helped to support learning. More systematic collation and analysis of data would improve the quality of the information that is given to parents and help them to support their children's learning more effectively.

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Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ellesmere 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	61	30	35	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	40	48	42	50	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	35	39	46	7	8	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	34	38	45	6	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	45	53	32	38	3	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	37	39	46	5	6	4	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	36	46	55	5	6	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)	31	36	41	48	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	46	37	44	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	39	40	47	4	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	34	45	53	4	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	33	39	44	52	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	49	35	41	1	1	1	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 all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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

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 pupils' 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.



25 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ellesmere College, Leicester, LE31BE

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 23 and 24 September. We enjoyed talking with you. Ellesmere College is a good school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school:

- You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you behave well and are kind to other students.
- You are making good progress in your schoolwork and in your behaviour, and many of you do well in external examinations.
- Teaching is good. You like and respect your teachers and teaching assistants and work hard for them.
- You enjoy the good range of sports and activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after; there is good care and support for all of you.

How we thought it could get even better:

- Occasionally, lessons are a bit slow and the work set could be more difficult to help you learn faster.
- Senior leaders need to analyse your progress and compare it with other schools to make sure you are all doing your best and to plan for improvement.
- There are too many option courses in the sixth form that do not help older students to learn new things.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones HMI

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