

New College Leicester

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131945
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	341258
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Gwen Coates HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	771
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Breckon
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Brown
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 46 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, faculty and year improvement plans, minutes of governors meetings and the 77 parental questionnaires that were submitted.

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

- how well data on individual students' achievement is used to plan lessons and ensure that teaching strategies are sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all students
- the extent to which students are becoming effective independent learners by taking responsibility for their learning, understanding their targets and how to improve on their work and how well teaching strategies and the effectiveness of marking is assisting this
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all students and in particular how well it prepares them for their future adult lives
- how well educational provision ensures that individual groups of students achieve their potential
- the extent to which middle managers drive improvement in teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility.

Information about the school

New College Leicester is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive school with a larger proportion of girls than boys. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average and the number of those with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most students are White British, with the number of students from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is an additional language being below average. The number of students entering and leaving the school other than at normal times is well above average.

The trend over recent years of a falling roll has now been halted and the current Year 7 is almost full to capacity. Equally, problems with the recruitment of specialist staff in recent years have been resolved and the school is now fully staffed.

The school gained the Arts Mark Silver and Sports Mark Awards in 2007 and the Healthy Schools and Inclusion Quality Mark Awards in 2008.

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

2

Main findings

New College Leicester is a school that is improving rapidly. Students' attainment and the progress they make have been improving year on year as a result of better teaching and learning and a curriculum that meets their needs. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school and their attitudes to learning are now good and students feel safe in school. This is the result of good care, guidance and support. The following comment sums up students' views of their teachers: 'The teachers care a lot for how we learn and the way we learn and are determined to get you good levels.'

The governing body is exceptional in the level of experience and expertise it brings to the school. It constantly challenges the school on every front to raise standards and achievement. The outstanding leadership provided by the principal and the skill and dedication provided by the senior leadership team is embedding ambition and raising the aspirations and expectations of students, their parents and carers, and indeed all the school's partners and other stakeholders. A major strength of the school is that its improvement, from what was a very low base in relation to student outcomes and educational provision, is sustainable because middle leaders, including heads of faculties and heads of years are driving improvement in their own areas of responsibility. Of course, none of this would be possible without the dedication and commitment of the teaching staff and all the support staff.

Rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for tracking students' progress are in place and appropriate and well-focused support is provided where performance falls short of expectations. The school's self evaluation is accurate in its identification of strengths and weaknesses, incisive in its evaluation but cautious in its judgements.

The school recognises that it is on a journey and that further improvement is still required. Although attainment has improved consistently over a number of years, the target of at least 30% of students gaining 5 or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above has not yet been met. Teaching has improved so that none is now inadequate and much is good. However, in some lessons, assessment is not used as effectively as it might be to develop students' understanding and improve their learning, and teaching does not always stretch the abilities of all students so that they achieve their potential.

The school ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all students and works very effectively to reduce any variation between the achievements of individual groups of students. It develops students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well and as a result, the school is a cohesive community in which students work well together.

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However, the inward focus on achievement and standards means that although good attention has been given to the school's own community and issues in the local community, less attention has been given to promoting community cohesion beyond the local community, for example in the regional, national and international community of which the school is a part.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of attainment by:
 - embedding the use of assessment in the classroom so that the quality of learning and the progress students make in all key stages is at least good
 - developing teaching strategies further so that students of all abilities are sufficiently challenged in all their lessons
 - ensuring that Year 11 students meet National Challenge targets by 2011.
- Develop the school's work in promoting community cohesion by broadening its activities beyond the local community.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Standards and attainment are low but improvement over time is sustained and secure. The percentage of students gaining 5 or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above has increased from 8% in 2005 to 24% in 2009 and the percentage of students gaining these results at grade G or above has increased from 58% to 91%. Generally attainment in vocational subjects is better than in traditional academic subjects. Although overall, the progress students are making over time is satisfactory, elements are good. For example, progress in lessons observed during the inspection was often good, students of all abilities make good progress in English and the progress made overall by individual groups of students between key stages 3 and 4 is good. There is little variation between the achievement of individual groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and none are underachieving. Students are meeting the challenging individual targets set for them. Few racist or bullying incidents occur and when they do, students feel confident that they will be dealt with effectively and promptly. Students respond well to the expectations of staff and to the school's behaviour management policy and exclusions show a downward trend. Students' are willing to listen to others and respect points of view that are different from their own. Students' moral and social development is good and the school's good focus on human achievement, and the individual skills and qualities of students, is raising their spiritual understanding and appreciation. There are good participation rates in sports-related activities and students have a good understanding of the importance of sexual health and the dangers of smoking and

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alcohol misuse. However, they do not always make healthy choices about their diets. Students make a good contribution to the school community via their involvement in the school council. They care about the school and feel an integral part of the decision making process that is bringing about improvements. However, students' experiences of contributing to the wider regional, national and international community are more limited. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are improving, punctuality is now satisfactory and attendance, which is now average, shows sustained improvement over the last 3 years. Students understand the importance of relevant qualifications to their future economic well-being and, as a result, the number of students who are not in education, employment or training on leaving school has reduced significantly over the past 3 years.

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	4
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	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The need to improve examination results in Key Stages 4 and 5 is focusing teaching and learning. The characteristics of good teaching observed, particularly in Key Stage 4 include:

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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- structured activities, including good starters, good pace and teaching strategies that meet the needs of all students
- inclusive approaches so that students are fully engaged and on task
- students feeling safe and confident, with good attitudes to learning
- high expectations and challenging and motivating questioning
- teaching assistants being fully involved
- self and peer assessment.

Despite this, effective assessment to support learning is not sufficiently embedded in all lessons. Although regular marking occurs with good feedback to support progress in some subjects, this is variable across subjects. Students generally know at which levels or grades they are working at and what their targets are, but they are sometimes less clear about what they need to do next in order to improve.

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of all students and, given the size of the school, there is a good range of options in Key Stage 4, including one for vulnerable students who benefit from a highly individualised curriculum appropriate to their needs. There are good partnerships with a range of organisations, including schools, colleges and local universities that extend the curriculum. The introduction of 14-19 Diplomas in Hair and Beauty and Society, Health and Development have broadened students' options. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities, including work-related events and well-attended subject-related booster sessions and homework clubs. A good variety of extra-curricular activities are provided, which are well attended.

Advice and guidance at key transition points, for example when joining the school in Year 7, when choosing options in Years 9 and 10 and when considering post-16 options, is good. Support for vulnerable students is outstanding and a real strength of the school; it is sensitive, very well-targeted to their needs and enables them to make good progress. The school works very well with external agencies to support students, promote good attendance and prevent exclusions. It has good systems for supporting those students on fixed term exclusions, with re-integration support that involves families as well as the students themselves.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's planning to improve teaching and learning is good, with regular monitoring of teaching, analysis of observations and follow-up support. Staff receive highly effective

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and well focused professional development. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of students' progress at form and subject level takes place ensuring that underachievement is identified quickly and appropriate intervention is put in place promptly. Middle leaders demonstrate an impressive grasp of priorities and an excellent capacity to bring about further improvement in the areas they are accountable for. They are fully supported by committed and skilled senior leaders. Development groups, consisting of a cross section of staff, lead improvements in key areas such as teaching and learning and raising achievement. As a result, all staff take responsibility for, and contribute to, the improvement of the school. The governing body is rigorous and challenging in pursuing its priority to improve the achievement of all students in the school. Its very high expectations of the principal in leading the school are fully met by her determination, sensitivity and absolute commitment to bring about change and improve outcomes for students.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. The personalised way in which it organises the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students, the effective monitoring and tracking of individual students' progress and the focused targeting of support for individuals supports this. The school knows its context very well and its actions within the school to raise aspirations and promote equality of opportunity result in a cohesive school community. The school is aware that it now needs to take steps to promote community cohesions in the wider community, regionally, nationally and internationally and to evaluate the impact of this on student outcomes.

The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are in place and the school's safeguarding procedures are meticulous. Value for money is judged to be satisfactory because students' achievement is satisfactory. However, the school is using the resources it has exceptionally well. The physical learning environment is welcoming and very well cared for and the site is used efficiently as the base for a range of community groups. The superb international-standard gymnasium facilities on site, which are the result of the school's partnership with a local gymnastics club, enable not only New College's own students to benefit but also benefit pupils from feeder primary schools and the local community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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

Students make good progress in relation to their starting points and gain qualifications that stand them in good stead for their future education, training or employment. Completion and retention rates are good. Students say they very much enjoy the sixth form experience and get on well together, and with their teachers. They make a good contribution to the rest of school by taking on the responsibility of helping younger students and organising events for themselves.

Teaching is good and teachers, particularly in vocational areas have very good knowledge and expertise, as well as enthusiasm and the ability to transmit this to students. Students have clear targets and know what they need to do to reach them. Rigorous monitoring of students' progress takes place. The curriculum is carefully planned to meet students' particular needs. There is a very high level of commitment to providing every student with the best possible provision. The well conceived strategic planning for the future indicates good capacity to improve further.

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

Although the number of completed questionnaires was relatively small, the views expressed about the school were very positive. Many comments indicated that there is increasing recognition among parents and carers of the improvements that are being made to the quality of education their children receive at New College Leicester. This positive feedback from parents supports the views of inspectors and the judgements they made.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at New College Leicester 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 771 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	30	46	60	5	6	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	23	30	49	64	1	1	2	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	39	35	45	8	10	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	32	45	58	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	25	51	66	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	26	45	58	5	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	25	48	62	6	8	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)	23	32	41	53	1	1	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	26	47	61	7	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	38	35	45	7	9	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	21	46	60	6	8	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	25	32	43	56	4	5	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	35	46	60	2	3	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 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.



9 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of New College Leicester, LE3 6DN

It was good to meet many of you when we inspected your school last week. New College Leicester is a school that is improving rapidly. We judged this to be the case because:

- your attainment and the progress you make are improving
- your behaviour and your attitudes to learning are good
- you told us that you feel safe in school
- your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

All these improvements are the result of better teaching and learning, a curriculum that meets your needs and the good care, guidance and support you receive. The outstanding leadership provided by the principal and the dedication and commitment of all staff in the school are raising your aspirations so that increasingly you know that you can be successful in your exams and have more choice about your future careers.

Many of you know that your school is on a journey and that further improvement is still required. These are the areas we have asked the principal to work on:

- the standards you attain in exams - even though your exam results have been improving year on year, we have asked the school to ensure they rise even further by making teaching and learning even more effective.
- ensuring the school focuses beyond its local community - your school has been intent on improving aspects of school life and has worked hard to build a school community that is pulling together. It has been very successful in this and we have now asked the school to focus more on developing its links with, and your involvement with, communities outside of your school and the local area.

You can support your school in meeting these challenges by attending regularly, continuing to have good attitudes to learning, working as hard as you possibly can and enjoying your time at school.

Best wishes

Gwen Coates HMI

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