

Sawston Village College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110902
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325254
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Phillips HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1028
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Lamkin
Headteacher	Mrs June Cannie
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 February 2006
School address	New Road Sawston Cambridgeshire CB22 3BP
Telephone number	01223 712777
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sawston Village College is a larger than average secondary school for students aged 11 to 16. Most students come from the Sawston, The Shelfords and Stapleford, Duxford, and Whittlesford wards, but a significant number come from further afield. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is around half the national average. The great majority are from White British backgrounds and almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of students with a statement of educational needs is average. However, the total number of students registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including moderate learning, dyslexia, or behavioural, emotional and social issues, is below average.

Sawston Village College is a fully extended school and holds the Artsmark Silver award. It was designated as a specialist science college in September 2008, having previously been designated as a specialist technology college since 1996. A second specialism in languages was added in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sawston Village College is a very effective school that provides a good standard of education and an outstanding standard of care for its students. From above-average starting points, students make good progress during their time at the college to reach standards of work that are well above average and develop outstanding personal skills. Leadership and management are outstanding. The drive and passion of the headteacher and her senior team have directed significant improvements since the last inspection, with great integrity and commitment to the well-being of students and staff. Students' behaviour is now outstanding and their attendance above average; they feel valued, safe, and greatly enjoy coming to school. An important reason for this is the excellent sense of community that exists at the college. Seventy eight years on, the ideals of Henry Morris, the college's founder, are very much alive and flourishing and, in many ways, this is a school at the heart of the community but also with its communities at the heart of the school. The work of the locality team and partnerships with parents in providing all-round care and support for students is exemplary.

Students play an increasingly influential part in school life, with forums focusing on school environment, ethos, and learning issues. The student representatives who met with inspectors spoke eloquently and informatively and they, like the senior management team, know their school very well. Self-evaluation rightly recognises the improvements made since the last inspection, but it also realistically recognises that there remain areas of variability in provision. Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning is good, overall. There is some outstanding and inspirational practice where fast-paced, interactive teaching is complemented by detailed marking and assessment that informs both teachers and students about what they can do to get even better. At the same time, however, there remain lessons where students do not play a sufficiently active part in their learning, where opportunities for them to contribute to discussion are reduced, and where marking is more limited. Overall, the curriculum is good with outstanding features. Science college status is already having a good impact, both within the school and in its communities. The second specialism in languages has a particularly good impact on students' cultural development and there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.

In its self-evaluation, the school states that its main goal is the raising of students' achievement. Disappointed by the progress made by students in 2007, the school's leadership acted swiftly to provide additional challenge and support that led to noticeably improved results in 2008. Through its target setting, the school recognises that the next step is to ensure that all standards are exceptionally and consistently high. It also recognises that securing consistency of learning and teaching is important for further improvement. The improvements achieved since the last inspection, the many new strategies that have been introduced by leaders and managers, and the school's accurate view of itself all show that Sawston Village College has outstanding capacity to make this further progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further raise standards in both key stages so that they are exceptionally and consistently high across the school.
- Ensure that all teaching focuses on students' active participation and involvement in their learning, and leads to consistently high levels of progress in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that achievement and standards are good. When they join the college at the start of Year 7, students' standards of work are above the national average. Overall, they make good progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. The unvalidated 2008 results show that the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSEs was well above average. Standards were at least in line with the national average in all GCSE subjects, and well above in many. Standards are exceptionally high, and progress consistently outstanding, in drama, music, and religious studies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, and the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at any level in 2008 was above average. Overall, girls achieve higher standards than boys in their GCSE examinations, but this difference is not significant.

Having missed its target for GCSE passes in 2007, the college set a challenging target for 2008, which it met. The school's tracking systems indicate that it is on track to meet the overall target set for 2009, and work seen in lessons during the inspection confirmed that current students are making good progress. Although the 2008 results fell short of the very challenging targets set in the specialist mathematics and science subjects, they were nonetheless better than in 2007 and this reflects the school's ambition for continued improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

A student told inspectors, 'everyone here is very positive and willing to do their best'. Students really enjoy coming to school, shown by their good attendance and the involvement of so many in community activities. Behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. Even when teaching does not involve students so actively in their learning, they are compliant and respectful of everyone's right to learn and teach. Bullying is very rare and, when it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have excellent understanding about how to lead healthy lifestyles, with almost half of them participating in extra-curricular sporting activities.

Students learn about the importance of contributing to the local and global communities by raising considerable sums for charity. They are consulted regularly through student forums and the whole school forum. These provide excellent opportunities for students to express opinions that influence decision-making and planning. An outstanding range of leadership opportunities helps them to develop into confident, articulate young adults. All of these attributes, together with their good literacy, numeracy and financial skills, prepare students very well for the next

stages in their lives, although their information and communication technology (ICT) skills are less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good and often outstanding subject knowledge. Students are eager to learn, and working relationships in classrooms are excellent. Lessons are planned well. Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards and more traditional resources. Outstanding lessons seen during the inspection were characterised by high teacher expectations and skilful questioning of students to test their understanding, with plenty of time for them to develop their extended answers and class discussions. Students say that these are the lessons that they find most enjoyable. In contrast, however, there are also satisfactory lessons where objectives are not always clear and activities not tailored sufficiently to challenge and engage the full range of abilities. In these lessons, too much of the focus is on teacher presentation, at the expense of involving students more actively. Further reducing this variability in lesson quality remains an area for development.

Similarly, whilst there are some exemplary examples of thorough, detailed marking which sets the highest expectations and increasing challenge, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. Too often, students are not given sufficient constructive advice about how to improve the content or presentation of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

All statutory requirements are met for the curriculum in both key stages. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy, with increasing support programmes for those students who find these core skills difficult. Whilst there has been good investment in ICT, the use of students' ICT skills across the curriculum is inconsistent and requires further development.

In Key Stage 3, a well-structured 'Learning to Learn' course introduces students to different learning styles and has a positive impact on developing students' confidence and independence. In Key Stage 4, the school has introduced a greater variety of options including courses that respond more closely to the different needs, abilities, interests and aspirations of some students. The curriculum now provides combinations of vocational courses alongside an extensive range of academic subjects, including a modern foreign language for the great majority of students which reflects the school's specialist status. There is an excellent range of after school clubs including popular music, drama and sporting activities, and an extensive programme of trips and visits outside school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school has an outstanding ethos of care and support that guides students throughout their time at the school. All requirements for safeguarding students and ensuring their wellbeing are securely in place. Close links with feeder primary schools

ensure a smooth transition for students when they join in Year 7. There are also strong links with local sixth form colleges to promote students' continuing education. There is a strong commitment to treating each student as an individual and enabling them all to make good progress. Students have confidence that staff will act quickly to help them with both pastoral and academic needs. The recently introduced system of Year Managers has further strengthened student support.

Students' progress is monitored in great detail, so that any who show signs of underachieving are quickly identified and intervention strategies put in place. The work of the locality team provides an excellent service, effectively coordinating the work of external agencies and responding swiftly to individual students' circumstances. It also responds positively by contributing to the schools' citizenship, and personal, social, health and economic education programmes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and her senior team provide outstanding leadership, each with clear areas of responsibility. They complement each other very well and foster an effective, professional ethos throughout the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. There is strong sense of teamwork amongst middle managers and teaching staff based on shared values, accountability for standards and a professional, reflective culture. Tackling variability and developing excellence in teaching lies at the heart of the school's professional development, and the fortnightly 'teaching and learning' morning briefings are particularly innovative. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored regularly and the most effective practice shared across the school.

The college's contribution to developing community cohesion is outstanding, not only because of work within the local community but also because of students' excellent cultural understanding of European and international issues. Governance is good and provides appropriate support and challenge. Excellent strategic financial management has facilitated improvements in facilities and increased ICT provision, and the school has gained a national award for financial management.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise Standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



7 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sawston Village College, New Road, Sawston, CB2 4BP

When I met with your representatives from the school forums during our recent visit, I promised that I would write to you with a summary of our inspection findings. I would also encourage you to read the full inspection report. You will see that there are many things for you to feel proud of, not least of which is the fact that you are members of an exceptionally strong community that takes excellent care of everyone. You are taught well and you are offered a good curriculum that has some outstanding features, including excellent opportunities in music, drama and sport. Some lessons are truly outstanding, and you told us that you enjoy learning most when teachers encourage your active participation. One of the things that I have asked the school to do now is to make sure that all lessons keep you busy and active, enabling you to contribute fully through dialogue and discussion with your teachers.

We think that the college has outstanding leadership – not just from Mrs Cannie and her senior team, but also from your student leaders. We were fascinated to hear about your work in the environment, ethos and learning forums. The college sets very high expectations of itself, and recognises that the next step is to make sure that standards in all your tests and exams are exceptionally and consistently high. We have every confidence that this final improvement can be achieved.

Thank you very much for the part that you played in our inspection, for the great courtesy and openness that you showed my team, and most importantly for the part that you play in helping to make Sawston such a good school. May I ask you to thank your parents too? Their excellent support, together with your splendid attitudes, and your outstanding headteacher and her team, helps to create ideal conditions in which your teachers can teach and you can learn.

With best wishes for your future studies.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector