

Springwell Community College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	112966
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378622
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2012
Lead inspector	Trevor Riddiough HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	862
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kay Bonnett
Headteacher	Tracey Burnside (Acting Head)
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2008
School address	Middlecroft Road Chesterfield S43 3NQ
Telephone number	01246 473873
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Trevor Riddiough

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Needham

Additional inspector

Gwendoline Onyon

Additional inspector

Sean Thornton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed 36 lessons taught by 35 teachers, of which four were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. They also sat in on 10 tutor groups and two assemblies. Inspectors carried out brief visits to a series of other lessons and held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of students, and members of the governing body. They observed the college's work and looked at the tracking of students' progress, performance data, students' work, whole-college and subject development plans, numerous policies, college documents, incident logs, and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 289 parents and carers, 150 students and 58 staff were received and analysed.

Information about the school

This college is an average-sized comprehensive school serving the village of Brimington and Staveley town, and its surrounding communities. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most students are from White British backgrounds, and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average. The college is a designated specialist arts college and it holds the Healthy Schools award. The college also provides educational and recreational opportunities for adult learners and other members of the community. In November 2010 the school moved into its new college premises adjacent to the old site. At the time of the inspection, the college was led by the acting headteacher who is covering for the headteacher while on extended sick leave. The college is above current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and 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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- Springwell Community College is a satisfactory school. The achievement of students is satisfactory and improving rapidly as a result of rigorous monitoring and tracking procedures, very well focused intervention strategies and effective support for students’ personal and academic development. The college is not yet good because a small minority of students do not achieve the levels expected, particularly in mathematics.
- The college has emerged from a period in which the school’s improvement was slow and students’ attainment was too low, particularly in mathematics. Standards in the college, including in mathematics, are now rising and students are making better progress. Where there are gaps in the performance of some groups of students, for example boys, those entitled to free school meals and those of higher ability, these gaps are closing.
- The quality of teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that students are always challenged enough to make good progress in all their subjects. Sometimes students are not sure how to improve their work.
- The college is an inclusive and welcoming community and the vast majority of pupils feel safe. Students’ good behaviour contributes positively to their learning and the orderly college environment. Students enjoy taking responsibility and develop good team working and most work hard.
- The acting headteacher leads the school effectively, with good support from a newly formed senior leadership team. Her commitment and determination to raise standards are evident in all her work. Self-evaluation is precise and accurate, and monitoring is used effectively to generate improvements, particularly in teaching. The governing body has a satisfactory but increasingly effective grasp of how to probe and challenge school performance.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring

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visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by accelerating rates of progress especially in mathematics, by:
 - setting consistently high expectations for students of all abilities
 - reviewing targets more systematically with students so that they clearly understand what to do to improve their work.
- Increase the proportion of high-quality teaching across the school by:
 - making more effective use of assessment information to match tasks to pupils' needs and capabilities more accurately
 - promoting students' independent learning skills
 - sharing the good practice in teaching and learning that exists in some areas across all departments through a planned approach.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Provisional results from GCSE examinations in 2011 indicate that students did not always achieve the results predicted, most often in mathematics, where results were well below average. Although inspection evidence of current students' work in class and in books indicates that achievement is rising sharply, overall results were below national averages last year. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes at 74% was the highest in the college's history.

Although students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is low, attainment on entry is well below average, indicating progress is broadly in line with expectations overall. The college is undergoing rapid improvement and progress levels in most subjects are now good or better, including in mathematics. This is evident in the number of students currently in Year 11 who have attained their targets and who have already gained a grade C or above in English or mathematics in their GCSE module results. Even higher numbers in Year 10 are set to follow.

This improved progress is also evident for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Here the improvements are due to the introduction of a more appropriate curriculum, coupled with improved identification of all students' needs and more targeted support to meet them throughout the school.

In humanities, results are significantly above the national average. Students in all years, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, expressed their enjoyment of subjects that offer practical, collaborative activities and

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teaching that inspires. For example, in an outstanding applied physical education lesson, the teacher encouraged the acquisition of high level skills in basketball, through challenging practical activities. Students worked hard together to practise, develop and evaluate the skills that they had learned.

The gaps in attainment between different groups are narrowing, for example, for students known to be eligible for free school meals. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs now make progress in line with their peers, and the attainment of boys is catching up with that of girls. However, there is still some unevenness in the performance of all students across the curriculum, which is closely aligned with the quality of teaching. Parents' views suggest that most parents and carers are happy with the progress that their child is making.

Quality of teaching

College records show that teaching and learning are improving and most lessons are good with some that are outstanding. Responses from parents and carers were extremely positive, with the majority saying that their children are taught well. Inspectors agree this is increasingly the case. However this improvement is only relatively recently established in some subjects, for example in mathematics. In good lessons, assessments are used well to ensure that there is the right level of challenge for all learners in the class. Activities are lively and interesting, and students benefit from verbal feedback during the lesson as well as from the written comments in their books on how to improve. Students are encouraged to work independently and, as a result, make good progress. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, students worked steadily through linear, quadratic and cubic graphs. The teacher modelled the expected responses using a writing frame and good attention was paid to the examination requirements. Targeted questioning developed students' deeper understanding of problem solving and then students were left to plot their own graphs and work out for themselves what happens.

However, in some lessons assessment information is not used precisely enough to plan work which matches different students' needs and capabilities, especially those of higher ability. Some marking is too erratic or general to ensure all students are clear about how they are progressing and how to improve their work.

Opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are often well developed. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson, the teacher capitalised on the joy and wonder of finding living organisms in leaf litter. As a result, students appreciated the importance of living things in recycling and the circle of life and death. In tutor time, a discussion on smoking and pregnancy drew out social and moral issues well.

Many students enter the college with low levels of literacy. The increasingly successful use of early intervention and good reinforcement of literacy across the curriculum in all lessons are enabling most to make rapid progress, especially in reading.

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The planned curriculum makes a positive impact on learning. In Year 7, a combined curriculum through 'project management' includes literacy, numeracy and personal development taught through a range of topics which give students the opportunity to learn and practise their basic skills. 'Super Learning' days, which are jointly planned by staff and students, enable a deeper understanding of selected topics. The college arts specialism has done much to promote students' interest in music, art and design, and the performing arts.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students overwhelmingly say that they feel safe and that behaviour is good. Parents and carers agree. Comments such as 'First class learning environment'; 'My daughter really enjoys going to school'; 'Any problems me or my child has had have been dealt with quickly and effectively' illustrate these positive viewpoints. This long established good behaviour results from well focused strategies and teachers' firm and positive management of students. The design of the new building, with its separate 'pods' aptly named 'Perform', 'Energise', 'Create', 'Discover' and 'Inspire', is highly conducive to the promotion of good behaviour and high expectations. As a result, students demonstrate tolerance and respect and make strong contributions to the establishment of a harmonious college community. The 'Behaviour Inclusion Centre' is well managed and provides a safe and supportive learning environment allowing students time for reflection, a well-formed understanding of restorative justice and mediation. This enables students who are at risk of exclusion to modify their behaviours and play a full part in college life.

Students are given responsibilities which they welcome and embrace. There is an effective student mentor system, and ambassadors promote the college to visitors. The good curriculum and tutorial system help ensure students' understanding of all safety issues relating to their own health and well-being is good. College records show that incidents of bullying, including cyber-bullying are rare and students expressed confidence that where it occurs it is dealt with effectively. Students are punctual to college and lessons. Attendance levels have risen and are now average. Well considered and robust strategies are helping to improve attendance further.

Leadership and management

The senior leadership and governing body recognised that achievement at the college had been low in the past and slow to improve. With help from the local authority, an accurate analysis was made of the key weaknesses and swift action taken to remove any barriers to progress. These have included additions to the leadership team, changes in subject leadership and staffing, improved tracking of progress and support for those at risk of missing their targets, improved professional development opportunities, a wider curriculum and more secure examination entry policies. The unevenness in the progress of different groups of students is reducing and the school's effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities growing. Better training has ensured that middle leaders now evaluate the work of their departments

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accurately and take responsibility for making necessary improvements. Thorough arrangements are in place for the management of performance and teachers are accountable for their students' results. Inadequate teaching has been virtually eliminated. Common goals have been established and an action plan is in place that reflects the correct priorities and clear success criteria. Though the impact of these measures on achievement is only recently evident, the commonly shared sense of urgency among all who work at the college, including governors, to drive the improvements forward demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for improvement. Governors undertake their statutory responsibilities well; procedures for the safeguarding of students are secure and the college's approach meets statutory requirements.

The planned curriculum is effective in meeting students' needs and aspirations and supports their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development well. Astute adjustments to the curriculum have maximised students' opportunities to gain relevant qualifications and increased their enjoyment and motivation. The recent change in the organisation of the key stages, with two years at Key Stage 3 and three years at Key Stage 4, has allowed greater choices. Students of higher ability can follow the English Baccalaureate or triple sciences, while others can follow new foundation learning and a range of vocational courses. The common core at Key Stage 4 is enhanced by a good careers and guidance curriculum which includes work experience for all. The mixed year groups of Years 9 and 10 in the different options choices are working very well with staff making any allowances for lack of skills from any Year 9 student.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



19 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Springwell Community College, Chesterfield, S43 3NQ

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out. As we walked through the front entrance we could feel the positive atmosphere. We enjoyed meeting you. We welcomed your friendliness, politeness and honesty when answering our questions. We particularly enjoyed seeing you in your new building and making the most of your time in college.

Inspectors judge that you go to a satisfactory school. Your school is improving at a steady pace. Previously, your progress has been slow and standards have been below average in some subjects. Now, we can see that you are making good progress in most of your subjects. This is because you are effectively taught and the curriculum is well designed to meet your personal and academic needs. Your behaviour is good and you have very positive attitudes to learning. It was good to see that many of you get involved in the opportunities to help others in school through mentoring or by being college ambassadors. We were pleased to see that the vast majority of you are attending regularly.

Your college is led effectively by your acting headteacher and her team of leaders and managers, who are determined to ensure that it provides the best for every one of you. To help improve your college further, we have asked your acting headteacher, the staff and the governing body to raise your achievement in all subjects by:

- improving some aspects of teaching so that you are all challenged to produce your best in all your subjects
- providing greater opportunities for you to work more independently of your teachers
- giving you good advice on how to improve your work and reach your targets during your lessons and through the day-to-day marking of your work.

You have a part to play and you can really help your college by ensuring that you do not settle for anything other than your best and that you follow up the comments and suggestions that your teachers make to help you to improve your work. I wish you all success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Springwell Community College.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

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