

Seaford Head Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114589
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311654
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy 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
Number on roll	
School	1095
6th form	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Brandley
Headteacher	Lynton Golds
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
School address	Arundel Road Seaford BN25 4LX
Telephone number	01323 872700
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Age group	11-18
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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

Seaford Head Community College is a specialist school for science and sport which serves students from generally above average socio-economic households. It holds the Sportsmark and the Healthy School awards. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds and the percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average. There is a resource base for students with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) but the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average overall. The college has plans to suspend the current sixth form provision from September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Seaford Head Community College, which is a satisfactory and improving school, has faced many challenges since its last inspection. Much has been achieved in the past few years, and the impact can be seen in the rise in standards by the end of Year 11. The college is strongly led by the principal, whose vision for, and commitment to, the students is shared by the senior leadership team and the staff, who work purposefully to overcome the difficulties which the college's split site presents.

The proposal to suspend the satisfactory but small sixth form is indicative of the difficult choices that have been considered and addressed. Parental views on this and other recent changes have been divided and parents express concerns about how these have been communicated to them. However, one parent's comments represent the significant proportion who feel that the steps that have been taken have impacted well: 'My child has been at Seaford Head since before it went into special measures in 2003. I have been very impressed with the progress that the school has made academically and socially since then.' Many students, too, have reacted positively to recent improvements; attendance has increased to above average levels and the number of fixed rate exclusions has halved over the past two years.

A key factor in the college's drive to raise standards and achievement is a curriculum that is increasingly tailored to meet the needs of the students. The school's leaders know that this is not yet happening consistently enough to ensure that standards continue to improve, particularly in the way in which literacy and numeracy skills are developed across each subject. At Key Stage 4, students make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are broadly in line with those found nationally. The college has made some improvements in standards at Key Stage 3, which are in line with national averages, although, as yet, students do not all make as much progress as they could. The specialist resource makes satisfactory provision to meet the needs of those students with dyslexia.

Robust systems are in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and this whole-school focus is beginning to pay dividends. There is much good and outstanding teaching and the college's specialism in science and sport is being used well to improve provision and raise standards. The majority of students behave well. Relationships between students and staff are good, contributing to students' enjoyment of most of their lessons, and staff place an increasingly strong emphasis on providing good care, guidance and support. Thorough systems of setting targets are in place to monitor and guide students' progress, and these are showing an early impact on standards.

The college has a clear and accurate awareness of its strengths and areas for development. It is increasingly using a wide range of data to inform its development and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory and gives all students a valuable preparation for their future lives. They mature into thoughtful adults and many are good role models to younger ones. They make satisfactory progress and achieve just below average standards.

The development of the curriculum has been hampered by the small numbers in the sixth form, although sports courses and a new football qualification are popular. Several subjects have

small numbers of students, which means they receive much individual attention. However, it is not financially viable to continue to run such courses, hence the proposed suspension of the sixth form. Many Year 11 students already choose to continue their studies elsewhere. The governors and the senior management team have considered all possible options very carefully with the best interests of all students as their top priority.

Students receive the same good quality teaching and good care and guidance as in the main school. With the likelihood of a few Year 12 students for the next academic year, the school is determined to honour its commitment to educate the present Year 12 students so that they achieve the best possible results.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at both key stages, with a particular focus on Key Stage 3.
- Make full use of the redesigned curriculum to improve literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

At Key Stage 4, there has been a rise in standards over the last three years and they are now broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of students attaining five A* to G grades at GCSE is significantly above average. Taking into account the ability of the 2007 students when they joined the college, progress overall by the end of Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. The progress of students in English and mathematics is broadly in line with expectation.

In Key Stage 3, standards have been broadly average over recent years; they have been a little above average in English and mathematics and below in science. The progress made by students was below expectation in 2007. In response to this, the college has taken steps to support progress across the key stage and it is improving again, although not yet at the same rate as Key Stage 4. More able students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in both key stages, although small steps in achievement, particularly for students with dyslexia, are not always recorded in a way that demonstrates clearly how much progress has been made.

The college is committed to raising levels of achievement further. The attainment and progress of different groups of students are monitored and analysed by the college, and where differences occur, appropriate action is taken. College-generated data indicate that students are on track to achieve their targets for 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are happy at school and feel safe and secure in the calm, welcoming environment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and many of them recognise the

improvements they have made across these areas. Students observe that bullying and racial comments are very rare and tackled firmly and immediately when they occur. Nevertheless, the college has rightly identified that students do not have enough opportunities to discuss identity, diversity and discrimination.

Behaviour is good and improving as more staff follow the school's procedures, dealing with minor incidents sensibly and effectively. The inclusion room is proving to be an effective way of dealing with any misbehaviour, with a resulting impact upon reducing exclusions.

The school council is well established. It is democratically elected and includes a member of the local Youth Parliament. Members are enthusiastic about their involvement in discussions about how the curriculum should be shaped and what style of teaching works best. They perform their roles confidently, working hard to lead fundraising for charities or to introduce environmental improvements such as recycling. The whole school joins an annual fun race for charity.

Reflecting the college's specialism, students lead generally healthy lives and participate in sport enthusiastically. They also understand the importance of diet and the dangers of smoking and taking drugs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The recent strategies and practices used to raise the quality of teaching are showing an early but positive impact on achievement. There is evidence of good and outstanding practice in many subject areas and the school is actively addressing those where inconsistencies remain. Regular lesson observations take place and, where necessary, additional coaching or external support is provided. Staff in the specialist areas of sport and science offer guidance to colleagues, so that practice is improved in areas such as provision for gifted and talented students and the use of assessment.

The good and outstanding teaching, including that seen during the inspection, is characterised by good relationships, high expectations and the use of challenging activities which involve students working individually or in groups. Where work is less well matched to the spread of ability in the class, or literacy skills are not actively supported and developed, lessons are less effective. The use of marking and test results to set targets for individual students is increasing. Students know how well they are doing and most know what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. It is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of new developments and to increase its relevance to learners. The college has consulted widely with students, parents and governors in its review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and in Key Stage 4 there is a growing emphasis on vocational qualifications which are better suited to the talents of some students. Able students are encouraged to take

their examinations early and offered an option leading to an AS-level examination in critical thinking.

The college has a strong extra-curricular programme and there is a wide range of educational trips and exchange visits. Participation in these activities by students of all ages is good. Effective planning is in place to ensure that basic skills in information and communication technology can be developed. However, the college is aware that the development of literacy and numeracy skills is not consistently provided for throughout the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The college cares for students with thoughtful attention to individual needs. An excellent handbook for staff provides them with practical and useful guidance, detailing, for example, the numerous agencies involved in support or ways in which students' needs can best be met. Looked-after children, others in vulnerable situations and those with particular gifts or talents are nurtured and helped to achieve their best. In conjunction with the local authority, the college has planned carefully the reduction in provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that their individual needs are not overlooked. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are securely in place. Students who find school life difficult are identified early and special arrangements are made for them, such as opportunities for working off site with youth worker input.

The school uses data increasingly well to spot underachievement and to put systems in place to help students stay on track. Students receive much helpful guidance about the options available to them for their future studies and many proceed to further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership of the college is characterised at all levels by a desire to raise standards and achievement and fulfil the mission 'to achieve excellence together'. The principal provides committed leadership and is moving the college forward with determination. With the support of the able senior leadership team, she is successfully moving the management structure to one in which middle leaders are clearly accountable for their work. The college has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses through increasingly careful monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of provision. This has led to strategically focused actions, particularly with regard to improving teaching and learning and building upon the school's specialist status, improving behaviour and attendance, and reducing exclusions. These initiatives are now well in place and are already beginning to have a clear impact upon students' achievement.

Financial management is good and the college is using its resources carefully to address the substantial issues of suitability of its sites and buildings. Governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development. They are well informed and provide good support.

In striving to deliver the most relevant and appropriate education for all its students, the senior leadership team has not been afraid to implement innovative approaches. Parental response

to these has been mixed and, although care has been taken to bring the whole community with them, the leadership team is rightly aware that clear and consultative communication will continue to be of great importance as the college develops.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Seaford Head Community College, Seaford, BN25 4LX

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your college. We really enjoyed our visit, particularly the chance to meet and talk to so many of you. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

We agree with you that the recent changes are helping the college to improve, and we have judged that it provides you with a satisfactory education. Many of you told us that teaching is better and lessons are more interesting than they were. We saw that this has made a difference to your behaviour, which is now good, and to your learning. Some thoughtful changes have been made to the curriculum and the staff work hard to help you to feel safe and to support you. We understand that the plans to change the sixth form may be unsettling but we are aware of the reasons for this and we are glad that you and your parents will be consulted.

We have asked your college to improve things in two areas:

- make sure that you all do as well as you can, particularly focusing on improving your progress at Key Stage 3
- make sure that the new curriculum provides good opportunities for you to develop your literacy and numeracy skills.

I hope that you will all try your best and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy Her Majesty's Inspector