

Swavesey Village College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110863
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	364566
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott 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 of pupils on the school roll	1215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ruddy
Headteacher	Martin Bacon
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The first day of the inspection coincided with one of the school's 'extended curriculum' days. Students in each year group followed a special programme linked to the school's programme of personal, health and social education.

The inspectors observed the school's work, including 41 lessons, involving 45 teachers, an assembly and two form tutor periods. They held meetings with senior leaders and groups of parents and carers, students, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors looked at a wide variety of the school's documentation, including the minutes of governing body meetings, various plans and policies, the school's self-evaluation documents, safeguarding records and incident logs, and samples of students' work. They also analysed the questionnaires returned by 157 parents and carers, 216 students and 60 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do curriculum enhancement days promote students' personal development?
- Does the high number of qualifications taken by some students compromise the quality of grades?
- Has classroom practice improved following the school's action to improve the use of assessment to support learning?
- Does the extensive support given to other schools cause disadvantage to Swavesey students?

Information about the school

Swavesey Village College is a larger than average sized secondary school with specialist status in science and languages. It serves Swavesey and a number of other villages that lie to the north of Cambridge. The school library is shared with the local community and the school provides a community education programme.

The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A large majority of students are of White British heritage. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English.

The college has been recognised through the Healthy Schools and International Schools Awards, Artsmark (Silver) and ICT Mark. The College is an Advanced Accredited Consultant School for the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the Principal is a consultant headteacher and a National Leader of Education. Since the last inspection the school has become a foundation school within the Cambridge Meridian Educational Trust. Plans are well advanced for the school to become an academy.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Swavesey Village College is an outstanding school in every respect. Every member of staff shows whole-hearted commitment to the school's aim of meeting the needs of every student. Students reach high standards and make outstanding progress because of the excellent teaching, the exceptional curriculum and the very high standard of care, guidance and support. The Principal provides inspirational leadership based on an absolute belief that every child matters.

The previous inspection judged the school to be good with outstanding features. However, senior leaders and the governing body were not content for the school to rest on its laurels. Although it was providing a good education for the majority of students, they sharpened the school's focus upon the needs of every child. To this end, they set three very challenging '100%' targets, known as the 'Vital Few'. These were: that every student should achieve a Level 2 qualification; that every student should participate in the wide range of activities that make up the 'Swavesey Experience'; and that the school should be recognised as outstanding in every judgement in its next inspection. All three targets have now been achieved.

In 2010, every Year 11 student gained the equivalent of five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C. Nor was quality sacrificed for quantity: the proportion of A and A* grades was twice the national figure. Students' progress was so good that the school was in the top four per cent nationally. The wide range of curriculum choices has played an important part in this success. Every student in the school engages in the school's enrichment programme. For example, more than half engage in sporting activity and a third are involved in the arts programme. More than ten per cent of students are involved in the production 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. Last year, every student joined a sponsored walk to raise money for charity.

Students' personal development is outstanding because of the highly effective tutor system and the excellent impact of the extended curriculum. Students get on very well with adults and with each other. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and behave very sensibly and safely. Their behaviour makes an outstanding contribution to their learning, with many showing well-developed independent learning skills. The school gives a very high priority to keeping students safe and goes beyond statutory requirements in its safeguarding procedures. It provides high quality home tuition for students with medical needs. Students have great confidence in the support available through their tutors and the student support assistants. Bullying and racist incidents are rare, but always taken seriously.

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A very large majority of students say they enjoy school. Attendance is high, with only a very few persistent absentees. The school is assiduous in working with students to address concerns that they raise. For example, the school has rebuilt some of the students' toilets, after some students said they avoided the traditional kind. It also introduced staggered break and lunch times to reduce congestion and anxiety, especially for Year 7.

The school has maintained its outstanding capacity for improvement because leaders pay close attention to detail. The systems of self-evaluation, improvement planning and performance management are extremely well integrated. Action plans are devised in response to issues identified through thorough and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. They are linked to staff performance targets to ensure that everyone plays their part. For example, apart from the Principal and the five senior tutors, every teacher is responsible for the achievement and well-being of each student in a mixed-age tutor group. Each student has regular one-to-one meetings with their tutor to discuss their academic and personal development targets and progress towards them. As a result, the school's care, guidance and support have improved from good to outstanding. The quality of teaching has similarly moved from good to outstanding through a programme of professional development to improve teachers' skills in using assessment to support learning. Students and teachers make excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning. Last year, every student gained a qualification in ICT.

Partnership working has been central to the school's improvement. The school works very well with other providers to enhance the outstanding curriculum. It also arranges regular 'benchmarking' visits, for both staff and students, to compare Swavesey's provision with that in other successful schools. These visits provide a stimulus for new ideas. However, changes are only made if they are consistent with Swavesey's aims and philosophy. The governing body encourages the school's extensive support for other schools because of the benefits it brings, particularly in developing the school's leadership capacity.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the current levels of excellence by:
 - extending the scope of the school's '100%' targets, for example in relation to new aspects of student participation and engagement
 - maintaining the capacity for identifying and addressing future areas for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

When students join Swavesey Village College in Year 7, their attainment varies across the full range but is above average overall. The school is successful in

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reducing the attainment gap between boys and girls that exists on entry. Progress is particularly high for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students make outstanding progress by the end of Key Stage 4 to attain very high standards. Compared to results nationally, the typical Swavesey student averages a grade higher in each of their best eight subjects. Vocational provision is exceptionally strong, but success in vocational qualifications is seen as an enhancement and not as a replacement for academic progress. Results in English and in the specialist subjects of science, mathematics and modern foreign languages are well above average.

Students' learning is good or better in most lessons, leading to exceptional progress overall. They respond well to their teachers' high expectations, showing both a desire to learn and an interest in the subject matter. They are keen to contribute ideas and opinions and to seek out information for themselves. For example, as part of their Olympics-themed extended curriculum day project, Year 10 students researched information to create a presentation in a foreign language. For some, this involved an unfamiliar language such as Italian or Russian. In mathematics, students successfully apply their existing knowledge to tackle new problems and articulate their mathematical reasoning clearly, though they are not always so adept at communicating their methods in writing.

All students learn to work in teams and to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Their experience at Swavesey makes an outstanding contribution to their employability and future well-being. Nearly a quarter take up formal positions of leadership, for example as representatives on the house and school councils, and in a wide range of student ambassador roles. Several clubs are organised directly by students. Year 10 and 11 mentors are trained to support students with personal and relationship issues. All students contribute to the community, with each house adopting its own charity. Students adopt very healthy lifestyles, with the majority taking advantage of the healthy school lunches and many sporting opportunities. There is a high level of participation in the inter-house 'SuperLeague'. Students respond very well to health promotions, such the anti-smoking campaign.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This was evident in lessons, tutor periods, extra curricular clubs and the extended curriculum day. For example, different groups of students considered the morality of taking a holiday in a country led by a corrupt regime, reflected on their feelings on the recent tsunami and learned a Maori dance. Students gain experience of cultural diversity when they visit other schools as part of the 'benchmarking' programme.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	1

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

How effective is the provision?

All three aspects of provision play a major part in students' outstanding outcomes. The breadth of the curriculum means that all students follow programmes that are highly suited to their needs, with bespoke arrangements being made if needed. In vocational subjects, there is a strong emphasis on learning by doing. For example, in a lesson on hairdressing, students learned about the different ways of curling hair by practising on artificial heads. In academic lessons, students are encouraged to think for themselves, for example to identify and explain the errors in an examination script. During the extended curriculum day, Year 10 students worked in teams, using their literacy, numeracy, ICT and language skills to prepare 'Olympic Games' bids.

Students are consistently well taught because teachers have very strong subject expertise and make excellent use of assessment information to plan engaging lessons that meet the full range of students' needs. Most teachers are skilled at adapting their teaching during the course of a lesson to take account of what students learn through observing and questioning them as they work. Regular assessment and feedback means that students are well informed about their current levels of work and how to improve.

The school has very effective behaviour management strategies, based on a system of positive rewards and specialist provision where necessary. The excellent transition arrangements are evident in the extensive liaison with primary schools and the very clear guidance for students on choosing their options. The school's approach to academic monitoring is exemplary, with a heavy emphasis of inclusion and achievement for all. The mixed-aged tutor groups mean that tutors can focus on the four or five students in each age group at appropriate times of the year. Every student is known as an individual. Form tutors make excellent use of the very

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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efficient management information system to monitor students' progress in relation to their minimum targets, their attendance and their well-being. Tutors have a central role in promoting the achievement of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For students with specific social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties, this is supplemented by learning support and inclusion experts, both from within the school and through the strong liaison with external care agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body and leaders and managers throughout the school have a shared commitment to the school's vision of achievement for every student. There is absolutely no complacency, with even successful practices being invigorated through review and further innovation. For example, engagement with parents and carers is already very strong, but the school is conducting a comprehensive review of home/school communication using a panel of staff, parents and carers, including staff who are also parents.

The governing body provides a high level of strategic thinking that enhances the school. This is evident in the establishment of the Trust and the support for the school's extensive outreach work. Each senior leader has been involved in at least one major project and nearly a third of staff members have undertaken external work of some sort. Secondment opportunities are created for middle leaders to join the senior team. Experienced staff stay longer because they can broaden their experience without needing to change schools. As a result, leadership is highly effective at every level, and the school's self-evaluation is extremely thorough and incisive. The school benefits from very effective financial management and provides outstanding value for money. Consultancy work is a net earner for the school, so resources, staffing and facilities can be enhanced.

The school understands fully the context of its community and takes very effective action to promote community cohesion. Partnership working is a key strategy for improvement. The involvement of so many staff and students in the benchmarking of good practice through external visits brings a surge of energy for improvement. Links with the global community are strong, with each house linking to a different continent. The school works closely to support health campaigns, including those associated with mental health.

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The promotion of equal opportunities is at the heart of the school's work. During the inspection, one tutor group reflected on the impact of disability as they learned to write their names using their feet; other students addressed gender stereotyping through rugby for girls and dance for boys. Students gain experience of different cultures through the arts and through visits and student exchanges. Every child succeeds and the school has many success stories illustrating its impact on students' lives.

The school's specialist status has a central role in the school. There are close links with the science community in and around Cambridge and the school's community links with industry and partner primary schools has been recognised by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. In modern foreign languages, participation is high and the department has influence across the school, for example by conducting lessons for other subjects in a foreign language.

Safeguarding is outstanding because of the excellent quality assurance and risk assessment systems, which are routinely informed by students', parents' and carers' views. The commitment to safeguarding is deeply embedded across all aspects of school life. The school's exemplary work with other care agencies is enhanced because the 'locality team' is based within the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers attending the focus group were very supportive of the school, which has a very good reputation locally. They praised the teachers' enthusiasm and the atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and students. They support the school's inclusive ethos and commitment to developing the whole child. They praised

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the arrangements for transition into Year 7 and for options choices. Parents and carers like the excellent channels of communication, including the reporting system. They feel that their views are taken seriously. One issue that was raised by a few parents and carers was a concern about lack of homework in Key Stage 3. However, as one parent pointed out, the students are achieving very good outcomes. Inspectors consider the homework programme to be appropriate, providing it is followed.

In the parent' and carers' questionnaire, the response rate and the levels of agreement with most of the statements were broadly average. Levels of agreement were above average for the following statements:

- my child enjoys school
- the school informs me about my child's progress
- the teaching is good at this school
- the school is led and managed effectively
- overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swavesey Village 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 157 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	52	67	43	5	3	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	84	54	65	41	3	2	3	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	75	48	75	48	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	50	64	41	14	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	81	52	70	45	5	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	36	86	55	10	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	25	92	59	20	13	0	0
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)	71	45	64	41	4	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	84	54	53	34	12	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	45	59	38	7	4	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	37	67	43	8	5	6	4
The school is led and managed effectively	95	61	51	32	2	1	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	63	44	28	9	6	3	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

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.



18 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Swavesey Village College, Cambridge, CB24 4RS

I am writing to tell you the outcome of your school's recent inspection. We agree with the senior leaders that your school is now outstanding in every way. As a result, you are making outstanding progress, both academically and in your personal development. This means that you are very well prepared for the future. You get along very well with each other and with the adults in the school and you make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community.

We think that the reason your school is outstanding is because the leadership is so strong, from the Principal, the senior staff and all the heads of department and senior tutors. We were very impressed with the school's determination that everyone should achieve well and benefit from the 'Swavesey experience'. Most of the teaching is good and much is outstanding. You have a very wide range of courses to choose from, including very strong vocational courses and very well planned academic subjects. The tutorial system provides you with excellent care, guidance and support. It is very unusual to find a school that succeeds so well. Last year, every pupil gained at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C. In addition, every one of you took part in one or more of the school's many extra-curricular and enrichment activities.

Over 200 of you completed our questionnaire, and most of the responses were positive. Most students said that they feel safe at school, learn a lot in lessons, know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. You told us that the Principal and senior staff do a good job. However, a very small minority of you said that you do not enjoy school. We have therefore asked the school to maintain its excellence and its commitment to support and engage every one of you.

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you all for the welcome we received and to thank especially those of you who gave up your time to talk to us or to complete our questionnaires. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector

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