

Soar Valley College

Gleneagles Avenue, Leicester, LE4 7GY

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and governors have united and worked exceptionally hard to ensure that teaching and achievement are of the highest quality.
- Leaders have successfully created a culture where learning is celebrated by both staff and students. Teachers' knowledge and skills are developed at all levels. Subsequently, this has an exceptionally positive impact on students' behaviour and attitudes to learning and their achievement.
- In 2014, students studying GCSE made exceptional progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Students achieved very well in almost all other subject areas.
- Teaching is exemplary. Almost all curriculum areas have examples of outstanding teaching. Teachers' have very high expectations and they use imaginative activities in order to ensure students make substantial progress.
- Students are proud to belong to the college. They demonstrate outstanding behaviour and attitudes to their learning. There is a great level of maturity and respect to towards all learning. Students' tolerance for each other and their ability to listen are excellent.
- Students feel very safe at the college. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe situations.
- Students are active in their work and embrace significant leadership responsibilities. They raise funds for different charities well.
- The curriculum is very well organised and meets the needs of all learners. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular visits that enhances students' social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- The personal, social, health and education programme, along with assemblies and other initiatives, promotes students excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 45 lessons, observing 43 teachers. Seven lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors conducted a series of further brief observations of students' learning, behaviour, assessment and achievement also.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and observed the supervision of the students at different points during the college day. Inspectors visited an assembly and a range of form registrations.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, the senior leadership team, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses available on the online Parent View questionnaire and considered the college's own survey of the views of parents and carers. In addition, they took account of the responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors observed the college's work and looked at its improvement plans, records and analyses of students' behaviour, the tracking of students' progress, and a range of students' work. They scrutinised attendance figures, documentation and evidence of safeguarding requirements, as well as information for parents available on the college website.

Inspection team

Raymond Lau, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Sharpe	Additional Inspector
Alison Broomfield	Additional Inspector
Deborah Mosley	Additional Inspector
Michael Hiscox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary college. The large majority of students are from an Indian-heritage background. Most students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of girls in the college is average.
- Over a third of the students is known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided to the college for students known to be eligible for free school meals). This is above the national average. There are very few looked-after children.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- There are six students in the main college educated off-site. Students attend different venues and organisations, including 'Educ8', 'Future Skills', 'Style studio', and 'Axlr8'.
- The college is the lead school for mathematics within the Leicester City Education Improvement Partnership. The college is supporting other schools with geography, design and technology, and physical education, and, until very recently, with use of the pupil premium.
- The college has three of its staff appointed as Specialist Leaders of Education.
- The college is a strategic partner of the Leicester Teaching School Alliance.
- The college meets the government current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The Principal was appointed on 26 August 2014 and was previously a Vice-Principal at the college.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the highest quality of feedback given to students is applied consistently, allowing them to act upon teachers' comments, so that progress is accelerated.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal provides very strong leadership and works harmoniously with members of both the senior and middle-leadership teams, enabling the creation and development of policies and procedures at all levels. Very robust checking of students' progress and high-quality teaching are leading to outstanding achievements by the students and exceptional attitudes to learning.
- The college has successfully tackled discrimination and promoted equality of opportunity, particularly in closing the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers, and between boys and girls. The pupil premium has been used very effectively to employ additional teaching staff in English and mathematics. As a result, students' achievement has sharply improved over time.
- The leadership of teaching is very strong; much of the teaching is outstanding and the vast majority is consistently good. There are robust systems in place for managing the performance of teachers. Sharp and decisive action is taken when a very small amount of teaching falls below the college's expectations. The school has a team of passionate and dedicated lead practitioners, who assist in driving teachers' professional development. Through the 'By Staff for Staff' training programme, members of staff have improved the quality of teaching greatly.
- Middle leaders are very effective and highly committed to the success of the college. Staff meetings are used to discuss teaching and learning. The introduction of weekly before-school departmental briefings has successfully covered the administration of departments. The middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching routinely and track students' progress, ensuring that staff members are held to account fully for any variations in the achievement of the students.
- The curriculum is highly effective. It is planned to suit the needs of the individual. The provision for more-able students allows them to be challenged fully and achieve higher-level qualifications.
- There are practical short courses for lower-attaining students to aid and boost their social skills and prepare them for the next stages of employment.
- The college promotes tolerance and respect for all faiths, cultures and lifestyles, which prepares students very well for life in modern Britain. The personal, social, health education and citizenship programmes are central to the development of promoting students' very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a high uptake of a range of extra-curricular activities. Students receive effective independent advice and career guidance to help them to have a suitable reflection about their potential careers. Year 10 participates in a 'developmental week' to help them to reflect about their potential careers.
- The college is leading the provision in the local authority supporting schools in working towards full implementation of its preferred models of assessment. The college provides highly effective support in leading the mathematics hub, frequently acting as a host school for visitors from other schools.
- The college's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet the statutory requirements. The single central record is kept up to date and suitable people are qualified to deliver first aid across the college.
- The local authority has provided monitoring visits to support the college. The college has not required in-depth support.
- There are rigorous checks on the students studying at alternative off-site locations, with close liaison between the provision concerned and the college. There is careful tracking of students' behaviour and attendance, as well as their progress. As a result, these students are making substantial progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very active and is very open with the senior leadership team. Governors know

about the quality of teaching and how the college manages the teachers' performance. Salary progression for staff is linked clearly to performance and the governing body ensures that the systems are in place and robust. The governing body challenges the college to hold staff to account with regard to the quality of teaching and knows what is being done to tackle any underperformance.

- The governors know about data and how effectively different groups of learners are making progress. They ensure that action to raise achievement is decisive and monitored sharply.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are exceptionally proud of the college. Their behaviour in and around the building is very impressive. Students ensure that the building is kept clear of litter. They enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by their above-average levels of attendance. The exclusion rate has declined significantly over time.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. The students present their work with pride.
- A distinct feature of the college's culture in creating a very purposeful environment for learning is the excellent relationships between the teachers and the students. One student summarised the feeling of others: 'It's not just the teachers, it's all staff.' Students feel that the staff make time and get to know them very well.
- In addition, relationships between the students are exceptionally strong. For example, in a Year 11 physical education class, students were learning to dance in the style of 'Hip Hop'. They demonstrated high levels of mutual respect and creativity that enabled them to work exceptionally well with each other.
- In the vast majority of lessons, students demonstrate a very high commitment to their learning. They make exceptional contributions to each other's learning. On the other hand, students show themselves to be highly independent. For example, in a year 11 history lesson, students were preparing their coursework with clear focus, determination and resilience.
- Students are active in ensuring that bullying is very rare. The anti-bullying ambassadors ensure that their peers are aware of the dangers. Some of the team support and visit other schools to highlight the potential dangers.
- Students who attend the alternative provision enjoy learning on their courses. Their attendance, punctuality and behaviour are all tracked closely and maintained at high levels.

Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The college ensures that all visitors are checked and monitored suitably. There are effective procedures in place to ensure students are safe at all times.
- Personal, social and health education makes an invaluable contribution to students' spiritual, moral and social development. In a Year 10 lesson, students debated the dangers of pornography, with high levels of maturity, thought and consideration. Students have studied a variety of topics, including the sensitive topic of female genital mutilation.
- The college's actions to prevent any discriminatory or derogatory language are highly effective. Students interviewed were able to articulate the dignity, tolerance and respect required for people with a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender preference. The students recognised the actions and strategies for promoting a safe college that also promotes fair and equal treatment, irrespective of students' backgrounds. Students were able to accept that some people in the country have extremist views; however, they understand that these views are not tolerated by those who believe in living in a multicultural and diverse Britain. One student commented: 'We respect each other and this is one community.' This demonstrates clearly students' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the formal subjects that they

study and the wider curriculum.

- Students' knowledge and understanding of risk is exceptional. Almost all Year 11 students have completed a nationally recognised first aid qualification with specialist training in using a defibrillator. The students articulate an excellent understanding of different types of safe and unsafe practices and clearly know what to do in order to protect themselves, including when using social media networking and using the internet in different situations.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The college has very high expectations and makes challenging demands on students. Both teaching and support staff are highly effective, as they command the respect of the students and know them very well. Students thrive and enjoy most lessons greatly and, as a result, teaching in most subject areas is exemplary and leads to students' outstanding achievement. This is especially noticeable in English and mathematics.
- The most-able students are given opportunities to excel, taking responsibility for their learning and pushing themselves further to achieve. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students were developing their understanding of 'What is a Scrooge?' from the short story, *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens. Skilful questioning extended the students' learning and helped them to grasp the concepts very well, which they could then apply to their writing.
- The impact of teaching on students' learning in literacy, reading, and numeracy is very strong and practice is secure across the college. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, students used more complex sentences, focusing on the quality of language and subject-specific words to aid learning. In a Year 11 science lesson, the teacher aided students' ability to link percentages to real-life situations, applying them when calculating the compounds they were working with.
- The college is developing innovative use of computing software and applications to enable analysis and provide instant feedback to students, so that they sustain their levels of learning. The analysis enables the college to drive all learners to achieve even more.
- There are examples of very high-quality marking and feedback given to students on their work, noticeably in English, science, and geography. Students respond very well to the comments provided by the teachers, using the 'green pen'. However, across the college, the practice is not always consistently of a sufficiently high quality. The college is aware of this and continues to take decisive action in addressing this area.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students join the college with knowledge and skills that are typically below the national average. By the time they leave, students' attainment is above average. This is an outstanding achievement. Students from an Indian-heritage background are making rapid and substantial progress over time.
- For the past three years, with a very slight dip in 2013, almost three quarters of the students have achieved good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of students making rapid progress is high. It rose substantially in 2014. Across the school, students' achievement in almost all subjects is above average. Over time, students' progress in English, mathematics, languages, science, and the humanities has been consistently and exceptionally high.
- Disadvantaged students are making outstanding progress in English and mathematics. The gap in students' attainment in both English and mathematics, when compared to students nationally and within the school, is approximately one third of a grade. The college continues to place a high priority on the achievements of these students to ensure that they continue to do very well. For example, in a Year 8 numeracy intervention session, a group of students was stimulated to solve problems and challenges that the support staff member posed and students' determination and drive to learn resulted in their high

levels of achievement.

- The most-able students achieve exceptionally good grades. In 2014, one quarter of the students attained very high GCSE grades in both English and mathematics. The proportion of students gaining higher grades at GCSE level has risen over time. The school has ensured that a range of very well-targeted interventions, including master classes and students attempting more challenging qualifications, have led to students' aspirations being raised. They are very well prepared for the world of work and the next stage of their lives. The most able are not entered for early GCSE examinations.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are making rapid progress from below-average starting points. The individual support they receive helps to bring this about, so that their progress is very similar to their peers'.
- The achievement of students studying off site at different colleges and institutions is outstanding. These students perform very well and the college ensures that the careful monitoring of their progress and welfare is paramount. The college only enters these students for early English and mathematics GCSEs. This ensures that the students have suitable opportunities to achieve the highest grades, given their specific needs.
- Progress across the college is rapid and sustained. Students observed in all areas had very positive attitudes to learning. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, students were learning about spheres and cylinders, working collaboratively with each other. The teacher acted as a facilitator of learning in a way that enabled students to make exceptional progress.
- The progress of students targeted for the Year 7 catch-up funding has been very good. This is evident in a number of students who read to the inspectors. The students are eager and greatly enjoy reading, as a result of the excellent literacy programme that is established across the curriculum.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120286
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	449610

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1275
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Inderjit Singh Panesar
Principal	Julie Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2010
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