

# Gamlingay Village College

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 110894             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cambridgeshire     |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 356833             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 9–10 February 2011 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Ceri Morgan HMI    |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Foundation   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9–13   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 214  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Vacant   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Michael Clark  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 16 October 2007  |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Station Road<br>Gamlingay<br>Sandy<br>SG19 3HD   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01767 650360   |
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**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

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Twenty three lessons were visited and every teacher observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, consultant headteacher and, where possible given the high absence levels, members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and other staff. They observed the school's work and looked at key strategic documentation, including the school development plan, subject and departmental plans, the pupil tracking system and a sample of pupils' work. A discussion was also held with a representative of the local authority. Responses to 86 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were considered.

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

- progress and attainment in Years 7 and 8 and the impact of this on pupils' overall achievement, including whether the school's assessment and tracking system is accurate
- the low rate of progress in mathematics and what is being done to improve it
- the achievement of more-able pupils to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- the identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and whether it is leading to effective intervention and support
- the quality of leadership at all levels including governance, and its impact on progress on the areas for improvement since the last inspection
- whether teaching is being monitored accurately and rigorously to ensure curriculum coverage is adequate
- the reasons behind the formal warning notice issued by the local authority.

## Information about the school

Gamlingay Village College is the only middle school in Cambridgeshire. It serves a wide rural catchment area that extends over the county boundary and thus takes many pupils from Bedfordshire. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school offers a wide range of facilities for the local community.

At the time of the inspection there were multiple staff absences and many lessons were covered by supply teachers. Few of the senior leadership team were in school. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals and the local authority has issued an initial consultation questionnaire. The local authority has also issued a formal warning notice to the governing body as a consequence of concerns about the school's performance in key areas. A consultant headteacher is working in the school for three days a week to add leadership capacity. The Chair of the Governing Body

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has resigned and, although an election was imminent, there was no Chair available at the time of the inspection.

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?****4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****4**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Gamlingay is passing through a period of uncertainty and change with frequent staff absences and severely limited capacity at leadership level. The senior leadership team has ceased to function as a unit and some classes have temporary and constantly changing teachers. These changes, some unavoidable, have not been managed well. This has undermined the progress pupils make and the standards they attain, both of which are inadequate. Teachers work in isolation and are not consistently monitored. As a result, the quality of teaching and the curriculum on offer are also inadequate. The areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report, all remain as concerns and several aspects have declined further, in particular standards of attainment and progress in mathematics. Weaknesses in core skills mean that pupils are inadequately prepared for their future education and prevent many pupils from tackling more complex or demanding work. This means that pupils of high ability are not sufficiently challenged and teachers' expectations dip to low levels to accommodate what pupils can do rather than what they are capable of achieving.

Leadership in the school is inadequate. The capacity of the headteacher to make the required changes has been undermined by absences at senior level and out-of-date or imprecise planning which lacks sufficient and measurable targets for improvement. The little monitoring of performance which takes place is inaccurate. The use of assessment data, by teachers in classes and at a strategic level, is both infrequent and inaccurate. This has led to long-term strategic drift which the governing body has been unable to prevent. Despite recent changes, the way in which school leaders track the performance of pupils, particularly for those in Years 7 and 8, lacks rigour and relies on teachers' assessments which are over generous. This has resulted in a school where self-evaluation is wide of the mark. There is inadequate capacity to improve and some aspects of day-to-day organisation are insecure. School leaders do not follow any regular testing procedures in Years 7 and 8 and, as a consequence,

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they are unable to accurately analyse how the school compares to other schools regionally or nationally. The curriculum, although compliant with statutory requirements, is disjointed and not managed well. There is significant variation in the amount of time spent in classes on some subjects compared to others and the frequent use of cover teachers means much work is heavily dependent on worksheets or 'one-off' sessions. Thus pupils often repeat work they have already covered and are unable to make links with previous learning. The use of technology to support learning is underdeveloped. As a consequence, the curriculum experienced by pupils, is inadequate and not well matched to their needs. Too few lessons are stimulating, innovative or hold pupils' interests. Despite this, pupils try hard and continue to contribute to the best of their ability.

Despite these major deficiencies the school does have some strengths. It is a happy place. The pupils are safe and well cared for and appreciate the support they get from adults. There are some significant successes aside from academic work. For example, the school organises a remarkably talented choir who are national champions. Teaching in some subjects, such as science, is good and pupils remain positive about their experiences. Behaviour is good and attendance levels have also improved to good since 2009. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and constructive. The ethos of support, carefully nurtured by the school, is strong but has been presented as an alternative to academic success rather than as complementary to it.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase attainment and improve pupils' progress to at least national averages in all subjects, but especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, by:
  - focusing on improving literacy skills in all lessons
  - developing a confidence and fluency in basic number skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership by:
  - ensuring that leaders at the highest level are held to account for school improvement
  - establishing clearer roles and responsibilities for leaders at all levels
  - mapping out and implementing a rigorous timetable for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes
  - monitoring the quality of the curriculum that pupils experience
  - strengthening the opportunities for the governing body to hold the school to account
  - revising all core strategic documentation, especially the school development plan, by adding measurable targets for improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching to increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by:
  - sharing good practice in how to observe lessons to get an accurate picture of provision

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- reducing the amount of supply or temporary teaching experienced by pupils
- increasing teachers' expectations and improving their use of assessment information
- improving the use of technology to make lessons more interesting and engaging.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**4**

Attainment is low and pupils' progress is inadequate, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics. As a consequence, achievement is inadequate. Almost all pupils make inadequate progress but more able pupils, boys in English and girls in mathematics make worryingly little progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same low level of progress as their peers despite some additional support. The quality and extent of that support is not sufficient to add to their progress. Pupils' progress in mathematics is a particular concern.

Progress made by pupils in Years 5 and 6 is inadequate and amongst the lowest nationally. In 2010, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 was below national averages. Few reached the higher levels, especially in mathematics. There is no fluency in basic number skills which means that pupils struggle to complete or attempt more complex work. The oldest pupils showed a fragile grasp of addition, subtraction and multiplication which results in inaccurate calculation, even when trying to solve relatively simple operations such as adding the angles of a triangle. Attempts at early algebra founder because pupils have limited knowledge of strategies or methods to solve their problems. The picture in literacy is similar with spelling and skills in punctuation and grammar not secure enough for pupils to write well, despite having a rich vocabulary and wonderfully creative ideas. The presentation of work is often untidy, leading to casual errors.

The school does not administer any comparative testing in Years 7 and 8, relying instead on teachers' assessments. These show that between 30% and 50% of each group are not on track to reach average levels. Given that these assessments are themselves generous, it is a bleak picture. The school was unable to produce reliable data to show what their 2011 and 2012 targets are for pupils to reach the expected levels in both English and mathematics. An analysis of available data indicates that it is likely to be close to the levels expected nationally at the end of Year 6. There are some stronger subjects, such as science and music where pupils do better, but the limitations on core skills mean that pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for their next stage of learning.

Behaviour is good. Incidents of bullying or racist behaviour are very rare and dealt with well. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning, even when teaching is uninspiring. They attend well and understand the value of healthy lifestyles. Pupils' social and moral development is good but there is little spirituality or deep cultural

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awareness of other faiths and ethnicities, meaning that overall these aspects of pupils' development are no better than satisfactory.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 4        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | 4        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 4        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 2        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>3</b> |

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers work in isolation, with little shared planning and no substantive or meaningful monitoring of their performance. This has been the case for some years and, as a consequence, there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching. Absences and extensive non-teaching time for some staff have resulted in the frequent use of supply or cover teachers who are often left to devise their own lesson content. This isolation has resulted in a fragmented curriculum where teachers have gradually lowered their expectations rather than maintained high levels of challenge. This has led to dull practice, limited pace and frequent use of worksheets or textbook revision. The use of technology to make lessons more interesting is infrequent. Planning shows limited ambition and variable provision for meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. Although teachers have started to explain learning outcomes as a way of helping pupils know what is to be covered, they use these with little enthusiasm. They have started to ask pupils to assess their own learning but often this is not followed up. Questions are more frequently closed, requiring brief answers, and do not allow teachers to assess pupils' understanding accurately or in detail. While teachers 'seek out' correct answers, pupils who offer alternatives are left with their misconceptions or doubt. Although most marking is up to date, often it does not offer tight guidance on how to improve or provide an accurate levelling of work. Occasionally marking is inaccurate and, as a result, pupils

<sup>1</sup> 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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are unsure what they need to do to improve. Pupils asked for this extra guidance in their survey responses.

There is no systematic monitoring of provision and some simple organisational factors limit learning. For example, there is unnecessary doubling up of teachers in some classes, overlong literacy sessions for the younger pupils and practical lessons, such as science and art, are sometimes conducted in unsuitable rooms. As a result, both teaching and the curriculum are inadequate. No outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection.

Despite this, there are glimpses of promise. Some teaching is good and, as a result, pupils are able to produce some good work. Relationships between adults and pupils are constructive and pupils recognise this, feel safe and are happy. They enjoy their education, despite the limitations. The school enhances the curriculum well with additional clubs and activities, including sports and music. There are some examples of the school achieving considerable success with potentially vulnerable pupils through thoughtful guidance and support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| The use of assessment to support learning  | 4        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>2</b> |

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leadership and management have no sustainable capacity to secure improvement. The headteacher works in isolation and the senior leadership team has ceased to function as a unit. As a result, the school has lacked strategic direction for some considerable time. The school's plans for improvement lack ambition, detail and specific targets. The school development plan, written in 2009, is no longer current and offers no opportunity for the governing body to monitor progress or improvement. Plans and ideas seldom come to fruition. For example, the school's Virtual Learning Environment – an on-line tool to help pupils and teachers access data and resources – is still not operational despite heavy investment by the school in its development. Key weaknesses are the absence of rigorous or regular monitoring and accurate assessment. As a result, the school's performance has drifted downwards. Leadership roles are unclear and meetings are cancelled or focus on organisation rather than learning. Records of meetings are incomplete or brief. Leaders trust teachers' assessment of pupils' progress to be accurate but this is not the case. As a result, provision is highly variable and leaders have an over-generous view of the school's performance.



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The addition of a consultant headteacher with considerable experience has increased capacity. However, this is a very recent arrangement and roles and responsibilities do not yet have clarity. Members of the governing body are supportive and committed to the school, but have been unable to secure improvement. They neither have access to robust data to allow them to hold the senior leaders to account nor have they asked for it. A mixture of brief, disorganised and outdated planning, coupled with very limited subsequent monitoring, means that leadership at every level is inadequate. Targets, where they exist, lack ambition or challenge.

There are some aspects which are satisfactory and, as a result of recent training, safeguarding procedures are good. The school is itself a cohesive community and respect for others is commonplace. Despite inadequate achievement, pupils are provided with a good understanding of the wider society within the United Kingdom but not fully beyond that. There is a suitable array of partnerships with others which include nearby schools, but this is not extensive. Enterprise links, for example, are few. Parents are not fully engaged and their views are not always listened to. Regrettably, some pupils expressed the same view. School leaders have insufficient insight into the relative performance of pupils so that equality of opportunity is also inadequate. The determination of the headteacher to secure a caring ethos in school has worked but he has not been able to secure improvement in outcomes or respond to the requirements of the previous inspection. Resources are not always deployed efficiently. For example, the school operates with small classes but given the outcomes this does not represent value for money and is unsustainable.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 4        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>4</b> |

**Views of parents and carers**

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Inspectors received 86 replies to the questionnaire. Many parents and carers acknowledge that their children are happy and well cared for. They appreciate the efforts to provide a school where pupils enjoy their time. However, a significant proportion also expressed concerns about: the progress their children are making; the lack of detailed information provided about ways they can help their children; and how the school responds to any worries they may have. Over a third of respondents had concerns about the quality of leadership. Inspection evidence indicates that these concerns are justified.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gamlingay 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school. Not all respondents answered every question.

| Statements  | Strongly agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 21             | 24 | 55    | 64 | 8        | 9  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 38             | 44 | 42    | 49 | 4        | 5  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 27             | 31 | 45    | 52 | 12       | 14 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 18             | 21 | 44    | 51 | 17       | 20 | 4                 | 5 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 14             | 16 | 52    | 60 | 15       | 17 | 3                 | 3 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 15             | 17 | 46    | 53 | 19       | 22 | 3                 | 3 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 21             | 24 | 61    | 71 | 2        | 2  | 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) | 12             | 14 | 45    | 52 | 12       | 14 | 4                 | 5 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 15             | 17 | 47    | 55 | 17       | 20 | 4                 | 5 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 18             | 21 | 34    | 40 | 24       | 28 | 7                 | 8 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 17             | 20 | 41    | 48 | 21       | 24 | 4                 | 5 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 17             | 20 | 38    | 44 | 23       | 27 | 7                 | 8 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 24             | 28 | 39    | 45 | 17       | 20 | 3                 | 3 |

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| 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.**



11 February 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Gamlingay Village College, Sandy, SG19 3HD**

You may remember that we recently inspected your school. I would like to thank those of you who took time to speak with the inspection team about your experiences. I was particularly impressed with your openness and the way you spoke thoughtfully about what you liked or wanted to change. It is clear that most of you enjoy school and appreciate the efforts teachers are making on your behalf to keep you safe and happy. You get a wide range of opportunities, such as in music and sport, to gain new talents.

However, we found that many aspects of the school need to improve. In particular the levels at which you work and the progress you make are not good enough. All of these could be improved by better teaching with more interesting and appropriate lessons, better leadership and higher levels of challenge. Fewer changes of teacher would be beneficial. We have asked the school to improve in each of these areas. To ensure this happens quickly, we will arrange for inspectors to visit the school each term to check on progress and to help with extra guidance. We call this process 'special measures'.

I am confident you will all play your part by responding to the extra challenges well. You already attend and behave well and there are signs of promise in the school. I wish you and all the staff well on this journey.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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