

Holsworthy Community College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113511
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	378721
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Frater 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	660
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Rose
Headteacher	David Fitzsimmons
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 November 2008
School address	Victoria Hill Holsworthy Devon EX22 6JD
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Garvey

Additional inspector

Paul Sadler

Additional inspector

Louise Sharples

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 30 teachers teaching 31 lessons, of which 12 were joint observations with members of the college's senior team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to a few lessons to observe support for students with disabilities and for those with special educational needs. Meetings were held with three groups of students, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspectors observed the college's work and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to college self-evaluation and development, safeguarding of students, and minutes of the governing body's meetings. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. In addition, they analysed 390 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The college is smaller than most secondary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low, with none at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress

The college specialises in technology. It has gained a number of awards, including the Full International School award and the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark for literacy and numeracy.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

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

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Since the previous inspection, staffing issues, particularly in the mathematics department, have contributed to inconsistency in teaching and learning across subjects. Learning and progress vary across lessons, especially for more-able students. GCSE examination results are broadly average. In 2011, they were well above average in English and science, but students underachieved in mathematics and results in this subject were broadly average.
- While teaching is satisfactory overall, there are examples of good and outstanding teaching. In the more effective lessons, teachers have high expectations. They make good use of targets and assessment to challenge and support individual students. In marking students' work, they indicate how it can be improved. They also engage students in applying their investigation, communication and literacy skills in a variety of activities. These features are less evident in satisfactory lessons. In these lessons, teachers tend to lead all students through the same tasks, which inhibits the pace of learning, particularly for more-able students.
- The behaviour and safety of students are satisfactory. While most students, parents and carers who completed questionnaires or met with inspectors agree that behaviour around the school is usually good, a small minority report that some lessons are disrupted. This relates mainly to lessons where the usual teacher is absent. Inspectors saw some low-level disruption in a very few lessons which did not engage and challenge students sufficiently. A few students and staff reported that behaviour is not consistently well managed.
- The principal and some senior leaders have introduced a new system for monitoring and evaluating students' progress towards more challenging targets. However, this is not used by all leaders and managers to challenge and support the quality of teaching and learning to secure consistently good provision and achievement across all subjects.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly for more-able students and in mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - using challenging targets and assessment to match planning and lessons to the full range of students' abilities
 - providing effective feedback so that all students know how to improve their learning
 - increasing opportunities for students to apply independent learning skills, such as investigating, researching and working in teams.
- Improve students' behaviour by:
 - engaging and motivating students in all lessons through providing appropriately challenging tasks
 - ensuring the consistent application of the behaviour management policy.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - developing the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders and managers in order to challenge and develop the quality of teaching and learning
 - disseminating the features of existing good practice to secure consistently good progress across subjects.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory. In 2011, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics was broadly average. While most of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were happy with their children's progress overall, concerns were expressed about teaching and learning in mathematics. Inspectors found that staffing issues in the subject have resulted in underachievement, particularly for more-able students. While attainment in GCSE mathematics has remained broadly average over the past three years, progress in the subject declined to below expectations in 2011. The learning and progress of current students in mathematics indicate some improvement, particularly in Year 10, although not enough to raise attainment in Year 11. Students make good progress in English and science as a result of better use of challenging targets and assessment to match lessons to their individual abilities. Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs in receipt of specialist intervention make good progress, particularly in reading.

Students' progress in lessons varies across subjects, but it is satisfactory overall given their starting points which are usually in line with the national average. Students are eager to learn and they support each other's learning effectively when

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working in groups. They say, and lesson observations confirm, that they make most progress in English, science, technology and geography. In these subjects, students enjoy the variety of strategies that engage them in applying skills independently, such as investigations in science, and role play and discussion in English. They apply their literacy skills well, but are given fewer opportunities to apply and develop their mathematics skills. They know their target levels and grades, and how to improve their work to reach them. Students say they make least progress in mathematics, languages, and information and communication technology. They state that this is because some lessons are disrupted when they do not engage all students and because, apart from in mathematics, they do not know how to improve their work in these subjects.

Quality of teaching

While approximately half the lessons observed were good or better, the quality of teaching is satisfactory because it is too inconsistent across subjects to promote good achievement. No inadequate teaching was seen. Most students, parents and carers are satisfied with the teaching in the college, although some raised well-founded concerns about the quality of teaching in mathematics. Features of good and outstanding lessons include a clear focus on the progress of groups and individual students. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson where students were responding critically to J.B. Priestley's play 'An Inspector Calls', the teacher was using each student's challenging target to inform the range of questions and tasks for the class. Students were also using the grade criteria, and the teacher's comments in marking, to inform them how to improve their work. The teacher's good subject knowledge and probing questions challenged and motivated students to explore the text in depth. They discussed their views confidently in groups, making reference to their recent theatre visit when they saw a performance of the play. Curriculum planning in the subject ensures activities are viewed by students as relevant and interesting. The lesson contributed well to moral and social development as students reflected on how they should treat others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves. Spiritual and cultural development was evident also in a Year 7 music lesson where students listened attentively to, and played, Djembe drums. Images of Africa on an interactive whiteboard, and the teacher's probing questions, inspired them to reflect on the importance of the drums to African culture.

The satisfactory lessons, including those in mathematics, are pitched at one level and do not challenge more-able students to reach higher levels. Teachers' planning, including curriculum planning, does not reflect high expectations of all students. Teaching assistants provide effective support for students with disabilities and those with special educational needs. However, teachers tend to rely on this, rather than adapting their strategies to meet the needs of the students. Teachers are not using targets and assessments to enable them to know the students well enough to adapt their strategies and questions to individual needs. While marking is regular, it does not inform students specifically how they can improve their work. Lessons do not consistently engage all students because there are insufficient opportunities for them to contribute to their own learning. This slows the pace of the lesson and students'

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progress over time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Typical behaviour over time and the safety of pupils are satisfactory. Although students' conduct around the college and their attitudes to learning in most lessons are usually good, there is evidence of low-level disruption in some lessons that do not engage all students. Also, there is evidence to show that the behaviour and anti-bullying policies are not applied consistently by all staff and the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is average. However, most students report that they feel safe and this is confirmed by the questionnaires completed by parents and carers. Students have a good understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, including cyber-bullying. They are confident to approach staff with any concerns they may have. They like the fact that they are well known in this small school. A student commented, 'It is like a family because it is small. Most people get on with each other.' Students are punctual to school and to lessons. Their attendance is in line with the national average.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of teaching and learning, including the management of students' behaviour, are satisfactory and promote satisfactory outcomes. To address the decline in achievement in mathematics since the previous inspection, the principal and the governing body have addressed subject leadership issues and have introduced ambitious targets to raise attainment overall. With the help of some senior leaders, they are monitoring and evaluating the progress of groups and individual students towards the targets, and ensuring appropriate intervention is provided. The capacity to improve is demonstrated by the progress made by students with disabilities and those with special educational needs. It can also be seen in the increase in the proportion of A* and A grades attained by targeted gifted and talented students in English and humanities. In closing the gaps with the national average for these students, and monitoring behaviour, including bullying and racial incidents, senior leaders and the governing body are promoting equality and tackling discrimination appropriately. However, teachers' use of targets to match lessons to the range of students' needs, particularly more-able students, is inconsistent across subjects and leads to inconsistent achievement. Subject leaders are beginning to develop skills in lesson observation and work sampling, to further inform the college's self-evaluation and increase the capacity for improvement. There is limited data on students' levels of progress to support all leaders and managers in holding teachers to account. Support for the professional development of teachers and for disseminating the features of good and outstanding lessons is not systematic enough to address inconsistencies across subjects.

The impact of the curriculum on students' outcomes is satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It meets students' needs and equips most students suitably to go on to further education colleges. The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately, although this is not planned systematically

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across lessons. Questionnaires completed by parents and carers indicate that the college helps them to support their children's learning. A few parents and carers do not feel the college keeps them well informed. Inspectors found that students do not know their targets or how well they are progressing in all subjects and agree that this is an area for improvement. The governing body is well aware of the college's strengths and priorities for improvement. It ensures that all requirements for safeguarding students are met. Safeguarding procedures, particularly the required staff checks and child protection training, meet requirements. The governing body now has improved access to information on student performance through the recently introduced system for monitoring and evaluating students' progress. It is, therefore, better equipped to hold the college to account for students' achievement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

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

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

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

13 January 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Holsworthy Community College, Holsworthy EX22 6JD

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your college. It was a pleasure to see you at work and to speak with so many of you.

The inspectors found that your college provides you with a satisfactory education and enables you to attain GCSE results that are in line with most schools. Your progress is particularly good in English and science, although not in mathematics. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with many good examples. You told us you feel safe in school. While most of you behave well in lessons and around the school, a few lessons are disrupted, especially when the usual teacher is absent. Your attendance is average.

The principal and his senior leaders are monitoring your progress towards challenging targets. Not all teachers are using the targets to make sure the work in lessons is pitched at the right level of challenge for you. To help you to make good progress in all your subjects, we have asked the principal and staff to:

- raise GCSE results so that more of you get higher grades, and particularly in mathematics
- increase the number of good lessons by:
 - using your targets to plan the work at the right level for you
 - writing comments on your work so that you know how to improve it
 - giving you more opportunities to develop skills, such as investigating and working in teams
- improve behaviour by making all lessons interesting and making sure all staff manage behaviour consistently
- make sure that all managers monitor your learning and progress to improve teaching and learning in the college.

You can help by making sure you all behave well in lessons and ask your teachers how you can improve your work. We wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector

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