

Launceston College

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique reference number | 112037 |
| Local authority | Cornwall |
| Inspection number | 378410 |
| Inspection dates | 28–29 February 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Bill Stoneham |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Comprehensive |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1350 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 276 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Les Kennedy |
| Headteacher | Jack Jackson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19–20 May 2009 |
| School address | Hurdon Road Launceston Cornwall PL15 9JR |
| Telephone number | 01566 772468 |
| Fax number | 01566 777371 |
| Email address | enquiries@launceston-college.cornwall.sch.uk |

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Introduction

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Bill Stoneham | Additional inspector |
| Fran Ashworth | Additional inspector |
| Helen Griffiths | Additional inspector |
| David Howley | Additional inspector |
| Susan Smith | Additional inspector |

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Fifty-five lessons were observed, featuring 54 different teachers or tutors. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, students, the Principal and senior and middle managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the college's work and looked at students' work, safeguarding procedures and other key documentation. In addition, questionnaire responses from 134 parents and carers, 86 staff and 267 students were analysed and their views taken into account.

Information about the school

Launceston College is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It serves the town and surrounding rural villages. Most students are from a White British background, although there are a few students from a range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is higher than average. Provision for students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties is made in an on-site specialist unit. For others who are at risk of permanent exclusion there is an off-site centre. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but rising. The college meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has specialist technology status and holds many other awards including being an International School.

At the time of the inspection some extensive building refurbishment was being completed. When finished, it is intended that the college will be able to offer extensive specialist accommodation for various vocational courses. There are plans for these facilities to be shared with various other agencies including social services and higher education, enabling the college to provide integrated services to its students and the local community.

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 | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key findings

- Launceston College is a good school. The sixth form is good. It has improved well since the previous inspection. Leadership and management of the sixth form are strong and the outstanding curriculum, both in the sixth form and the main school, enables students to make good progress. The college is good rather than outstanding because the quality of teaching is not yet consistently high enough to promote outstanding progress for all students.
- Students achieve well. Their good achievement has been enhanced by improvements to the curriculum. The provision of vocational options, reflecting the college’s technology status, has significantly boosted achievement.
- Most teaching is good and is boosting achievement. A significant minority of lessons are outstanding. In a minority of lessons, students are not consistently enabled to develop their literacy skills, especially their writing techniques. In a few lessons, scope for students to reflect on their efforts and assess their progress is limited.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Though a small minority of parents and carers and students expressed reservations about behaviour, inspectors found the college to be happy, safe and harmonious. Students’ excellent behaviour makes a significant contribution to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students have many opportunities to exercise responsibility. Charitable events, good quality assemblies and work with schools overseas are all examples of how Launceston College is successfully preparing students for life beyond college.
- The college is well led by an outstanding and visionary Principal who is well supported by effective senior and middle leaders, as well as staff and governors. Self-evaluation is accurate; strengths identified at the previous inspection have been developed and the college has improved well. Much emphasis is placed on performance management of staff and, in turn, on improving the quality of teaching. The strategies adopted are successfully improving performance across all subjects.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, so that by the end of 2012 teaching in all lessons is at least good, by ensuring that:
 - students are given more frequent opportunities to write in an extended form and for different audiences
 - students are given sufficient opportunities in lessons to reflect on their work and to be able to explain what they have learnt and what skills they have developed.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The achievement of most students, including sixth formers, those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, is good. Some students make excellent progress and their achievements are outstanding. This includes students with profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as those following vocational courses.

Students enter the college with levels of prior attainment a little below average for their age. Standards by the end of Year 11 are usually at least in line with the national average. GCSE results dipped in 2011 but current data clearly show that a strong recovery is in place and standards of work are rising. The college's extensive monitoring and tracking systems and evidence from classroom observations confirm this judgement. The data further indicate little variation in the performance of boys and girls and an improving performance from students known to be eligible for free school meals. The outstanding curriculum is contributing to this improvement. It is not only helping to boost achievement, it has greatly helped students in finding pathways when they leave college. Virtually every student who left the college in the summer of 2011 had an opening in employment, training or education to pursue. The college can proudly boast that less than 1% of those who left in 2011 were unplaced; this is well below the national figure for young people not in education, employment or training. Care has been taken to ensure that disaffected students are provided for well. The college's alternative curriculum provision, comprising a mix of traditional subjects, key skills and vocational options, ensures that these students avoid being excluded and are able to follow courses that meet their needs with success. As a result, these students also achieve well.

During the inspection, students made good progress in many lessons. In a significant minority of lessons, in subjects as varied as English, biology, drama and construction, students' achievement was outstanding. In an outstanding English lesson, Year 7 students developed their skills in evaluating and analysing poems. The lesson had pace and high expectations. Students coped well with the demands of language from

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a different era and responded enthusiastically to the challenges set. In a Year 10 construction lesson achievement was outstanding as each student had an individual task to tackle. Every student had their own work area to manage, which involved mixing mortar and then accurately laying a course of bricks. The mixed group of students were absorbed in their learning. They displayed considerable aptitude in bricklaying as well as in detailed numeracy skills such as measuring, levelling and calculating tolerances to an industry set standard. The level of responsibility shown by every student was highly impressive. Occasionally, progress slows when students are not given enough opportunities to reflect on their learning. Parents and carers are also of the opinion that their child makes at least good progress. Ninety per cent of those responding to the inspection questionnaire agreed that progress is at least good.

Quality of teaching

Most teaching is good and lessons are planned well. In the very best lessons, students' learning is often outstanding so that they make rapid progress. Independent and collaborative work is promoted well. This was amply illustrated in an excellent Year 13 biology lesson. Students worked well together and showed excellent skills in terms of self- and peer-assessment. High expectations and challenge are key features of the good and better lessons. In these lessons students are often encouraged to read for themselves and written work is varied and challenging. In a minority of lessons, where learning is satisfactory rather than good, there is a lack of consistency in the way that literacy skills are promoted. Key words are not always displayed or referred to and there is less emphasis on quality written work. Although students make good progress overall in developing literacy skills, this is occasionally limited when they are not given enough opportunities to write at length or for different audiences during lessons. Another feature of the less successful lessons is that students are not given enough opportunities to reflect on their progress and assess their learning. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons can be rushed and rely too much on the teacher saying what should have happened, rather than the students explaining what has happened.

Teachers take advantage of opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Team work and responsibility are fostered well. The outstanding curriculum has a positive impact on teaching, helping to ensure that lessons are engaging and interesting.

Parents and carers are happy with the quality of teaching provided. As one parent commented: 'Much of the teaching is excellent and the majority of the staff are caring, enthusiastic and committed to the children.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are provided with working environments that are safe, secure and well cared for. Students know how to keep safe and in their inspection questionnaires, students, parents and carers all indicated that the college is safe. Though a small

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minority of parents, carers and students expressed disquiet about behaviour, evidence shows that behaviour over time is at least good and more often outstanding. Indeed, in many of the lessons observed, students' good and excellent behaviour made a significant contribution to their learning. Students have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and have a well-developed understanding of the different forms of bullying. Incidents of bullying and harassment, including those based on race or gender, are rare. When they arise, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Exclusions are very low and have fallen significantly since the previous inspection. Attendance has improved considerably and is high and well above the national average for secondary schools. In part, these positive outcomes reflect improvements in the personalised and varied curriculum, which is successfully engaging students and helping them to gain better results.

Another aspect of the excellent and improving behaviour is the responsibility placed on the students themselves. Students in all year groups in the college are given scope to seek positions of responsibility and act as leaders. One particularly noticeable aspect of this is the opportunity for senior students to be elected as associate college governors. Students are involved in other programmes such as anti-bullying campaigns, and they can air their views and opinions through their various councils. Students are proud to be members of the college.

Leadership and management

The Principal provides outstanding leadership and has skilfully built on the strengths identified in the previous inspection. He is well supported by a good senior team, an effective governing body and a keen and committed staff. Morale in the college is high. Virtually all respondents to the staff inspection questionnaire said they were proud to work at the college. There is a strong focus on improving students' achievement. Equality of opportunity is promoted vigorously, especially through the rich and broad curriculum, and discrimination is not tolerated by school leaders or staff. Since the last inspection, the monitoring and tracking of students' work has improved significantly; the performance of different groups is closely monitored. This successfully ensures that any gaps in performance are identified and closed. Provision for all students is good and there are no significant variations in the rates of progress of the different groups; all are achieving well, with some making outstanding progress in their work. School leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust. The college site is safe and appropriate provision, including detailed risk assessments, is made for off-site education.

Accurate self-evaluation has led to improvements in teaching and learning. Improved target setting has resulted in better academic, personal and social outcomes. A keen focus on professional development for staff has also contributed to the improved outcomes by enhancing the quality of teaching. The governing body has a keen understanding of the challenges facing the college. Its members give senior leaders strong support and they are fully involved in monitoring progress and holding the college to account.

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Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has continued to evolve well and is now a key strength of the college's provision. More vocational options are available. In part, this reflects the college's status as a technology college. The broad and varied curriculum is now outstanding because it has directly led to better achievement in all years, including the sixth form, because students can follow programmes that are tailored to their individual needs. The improved curriculum, allied to high quality extra-curricular provision through assemblies, music, sport, drama and a variety of clubs, effectively promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A recently conferred International Schools Award demonstrates the college's commitment to extending the students' horizons well beyond the borders of Cornwall. The college has developed well since its previous inspection and has the capacity to improve further. Its success is reflected in the very high number of parents and carers who expressed high levels of satisfaction with the college's work.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Launceston College, Launceston PL15 9JR

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit to your college. We enjoyed talking to you and learning about your views. You told us that the college is good and improving and that you are happy with the education you receive. The inspection confirms that your college offers a good education.

We liked many things. You are taught well and your teachers are keen for you to succeed. In most lessons, the work set is challenging and engages you. However, in a minority of lessons that are less effective, learning is slower. In order to improve teaching further, we have asked the Principal and staff to ensure that, in lessons:

- you are given more opportunities to write in an extended form and for different audiences
- you are given sufficient opportunities to reflect on your work and to explain what you have learnt and what skills you have developed.

We liked the extent to which you contribute to college life and were impressed to hear that some of you are elected as associate college governors. We were impressed by your keenness in lessons, your excellent attendance and your outstanding behaviour. By maintaining and building on these standards, you can help the staff secure the improvements we have requested.

Thank you for making our visit enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham
Lead inspector

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