

Honiton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113499
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357370
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Grahame Sherfield 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	955
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Price
Headteacher	Glenn Smith
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2008
School address	School Lane Honiton Devon EX14 1QT
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 32 lessons and observed 29 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and students. Inspectors looked at key documents, such as the college's plans for improvement and the minutes of meetings of the governing body, as well as 230 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- The progress made by students by the end of Year 11, particularly that of boys.
- The impact of the college's actions to improve students' behaviour and their contribution to the college and the wider community.
- The success with which the college has improved the quality of teaching.
- The success with which the quality of middle leadership has been improved.
- The impact of improved provision on attainment and progress in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Honiton Community College is a comprehensive school of average size and serves a mainly White British community in the town and the surrounding rural area. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is above what is found nationally. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The college has specialist status for science and mathematics. Its sixth-form provision is broadened by collaboration with two other schools and a local further education college. New accommodation for the sixth form opened last year.

There have been major changes in the leadership of the college since its last inspection. A new principal took up his appointment in September 2009, following the retirement of the previous post holder. Two other senior staff moved on to promoted posts elsewhere and three new members of the executive leadership team have been appointed. There has also been a significant turnover among the teaching staff.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a good college that is improving rapidly. Students flourish as individuals within the welcoming and caring environment created and maintained by the principal and the staff. Behaviour is good overall and improving and was often outstanding in lessons observed by inspectors. Parents and carers are supportive of the college. One noted the 'fantastic opportunities' provided by the staff, while another celebrated how staff 'go out of their way wherever possible' to support students with particular difficulties. Some added comments on the Ofsted questionnaire praising improvements in the college over the last 18 months. The positive views are representative of the very large majority of those who returned the questionnaire and supported by inspection evidence.

Students' progress improved significantly in 2010 as a result of rigorous and frequent checks on the progress and improving teaching. Both the college's own data and inspection evidence indicate that the improvement has continued and progress in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 11 is now good. With the better progress, attainment has also improved significantly, although it remains broadly average overall. The college's success in improving teaching and learning underpins the rapid improvement. The improvement has been achieved through a sharp focus on monitoring the quality of teaching, rigorous management of teachers' performance, provision for professional development and additional support for some, where needed. Teaching is now good overall and an increasing proportion is outstanding, where expectations are high and learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Some teachers are too dependent on a narrow range of strategies for adjusting the level of challenge in the work, as the college has identified. They rely too much on varying the amount of support they give or expecting students to respond differently to tasks according to their level of attainment, rather than using activities that address varying learning needs more effectively. The progress made by students in the sixth form is improving, although it remains satisfactory at present as there has been insufficient time for the improvements introduced there to have their full impact. Weaknesses in some students' study skills and in their grasp of how to improve their work in response to teachers' marking are restricting their progress and the college has rightly identified these aspects for further development.

Students report they feel safe and are confident that any problems that do arise are dealt with swiftly by staff. They have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in a healthy lifestyle and respond well to the opportunities provided by the good curriculum. Students make an outstanding contribution to the day-to-day life of the college by taking on a range of responsibilities, for example through the College Executive Team, as associate governors and as sports leaders, and are involved extensively in the local community. They raise significant amounts for a range of charities.

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The strong leadership of the principal and senior staff is supported by the governing body which carries out its role well. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, resulting in clear and appropriate priorities for future action. The specialist status is making a positive contribution to improvement and to community links. There is a widely shared commitment to rapid improvement, particularly of learning and teaching, and much has already been achieved. Challenging targets are used well to raise standards by the end of Year 11 and the college has secured significant improvement in the quality of its middle leaders. Consequently, the capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by securing the more consistent use of a wider range of approaches in the classroom to meeting students' varying learning needs.
- Improve sixth-form students' achievement by using the systematic tracking in place to target the development of students' study skills and their capacity to respond to teachers' assessments of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students respond well when the purpose of lessons is explained clearly and when the enthusiasm of staff shines through and seizes their attention. Where students are engaged in well-designed activities that move at a brisk pace and teachers ask good questions to develop understanding, their learning is particularly successful. Generally, students maintain good concentration in lessons.

The college tracks students' progress carefully from their broadly average starting points when they join Year 7. The process is rigorous and involves frequent checks in departments and in year groups and careful consideration of the performance in each subject by senior leaders. Action is then taken where necessary to provide additional support. A good example is the work of the 'Diamond Group' that scrutinises the progress of Year 11 students. It has contributed to the college's success in tackling weaker progress by boys in English so that the gap between the performance of boys and girls in this subject is narrowing. As a result of the careful tracking of progress and of good teaching, students' achievement is good and improving.

The progress of different groups of students is checked carefully, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Additional support or challenge is then provided where necessary. As a result, those groups of students make similar progress to their peers.

Students understand the difference between right and wrong and treat each other with respect. They enjoy life in the college and their attendance is above average, and improving. Taking this into account alongside their improving progress and attainment, students are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have established good relationships in the classrooms and learning support staff make an important contribution to the good progress of the students with whom they work. The college has established consistent approaches in teachers' planning and in the marking of students' work. Marking has improved significantly and is generally good, although sometimes aspects noted for students to improve do not address the improvements they need to make in the skills and understanding of the subject sufficiently. In lessons observed, the strategies used to match work to students' varying needs were often too limited. Approaches involving the provision of varied activities or materials adjusted to different levels of attainment, for example, were rarely seen. In contrast, the best teaching observed was outstanding and characterised by very well planned activities and teachers' good subject knowledge was used very well to promote a high level of discussion among students. Skilful questioning was used very effectively to check students' learning and promote further progress, with good opportunities for students to deepen their understanding through assessing each other's work. Some satisfactory teaching was seen in a few lessons, in which teachers' questioning skills were less secure and learning proceeded at a slower pace.

The curriculum meets students' needs well, with three 'pathways' available in Key Stage 4, including the opportunity to undertake the English Baccalaureate from September 2011. There is good provision for developing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum

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and opportunities for developing skills in information and communication technology are a strength. The specialist status makes a good contribution through cross-curricular work, for example linking science with history and with art, and through special events on 'impact days'. There is a good and improving range of extra-curricular activities, although there are many students who do not currently take advantage of these in Years 10 and 11.

The college is inclusive and effective work with a range of agencies enables those students in need of a little extra help to make the most of their opportunities. The Student Support Centre and the Alternative Learning Pathways provision are particular strengths. Arrangements when students join the college in Year 7 are well designed to enable them to make a smooth start. Effective approaches are in place to improve attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The college's staff have responded well to the drive for improvement by the principal and the senior team. Senior leaders have very effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the college's work. There is a significant commitment to professional development in both local and national programmes. Heads of department carry out a wide range of monitoring activities that complement rigorous reviews by senior leaders and draw up detailed action plans for further improvement. The governing body is informed very well by the principal and other senior staff. It uses a good range of strategies to gain first-hand knowledge also of the work of the college, including participating in departmental reviews this year. As a result, the governing body has a good knowledge of the college's strengths and areas for development and is well placed to ask questions of its leaders.

The college ensures that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and is working with some success to improve the achievement of boys. That shows its effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities for all students to achieve as well as they can. The college ensures also that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. The college makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There is a very strong sense of community in the college and good links with schools in the local learning community where the specialist subjects play an important role. The college is establishing links with a school in a contrasting area in Britain and with schools overseas and has ambitious plans to develop these further.

There is a good range of partnerships with external organisations to extend the opportunities for students in their work and in their personal development. Multi-agency approaches are used to support individual students as needed and there are good links

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with local businesses and civic organisations. The college's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements well. Checks are made on all adults who work within the college and the outcomes of these are recorded carefully.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Students achieve results in line with national averages. There is clear evidence of better progress being made by current students than was by their counterparts last year, as a result of a new approach to tracking progress rigorously and providing additional support where necessary.

Students appreciate the systematic checking of their progress greatly and are starting to get to grips more effectively with what their teachers' assessments indicate and how they should respond to make better progress. Good guidance is provided for students to help them make appropriate choices for the future in the world of work or in higher education. Students value the contribution of their tutors and appreciate the energetic leadership of the sixth form. The new facilities are a significant improvement, valued by students, and have contributed to a marked increase in recruitment. The curriculum is good, with a wide range of courses available and students are guided carefully in choosing the most appropriate route to meet their needs. As a result, a high proportion of students complete their courses. Students value the teaching they receive and particularly appreciate that they are expected to be responsible for their own progress. Their study skills, for example in working independently, are developing, but it is recognised by the college that, with some students, there is a need for further improvement.

The new leader of the sixth form is enthusiastic and vigorous and has secured some important improvements in provision. There is a clear view of what needs to be done to

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improve achievement and more time for leadership and management of the sixth form is to be made available in the autumn.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded have positive views on most aspects featuring in the Ofsted questionnaire. A very small minority have concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence indicates that behaviour is good and improving. A few parents and carers have concerns about the information provided on their children's progress and how the college responds to parents' and carers' suggestions. The college has recognised that parents and carers would like more explanation to accompany the data in students' reports and improvements are planned for the new academic year.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Honiton Community 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 230 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 955 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	25	147	64	18	8	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	60	26	155	67	11	5	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	57	25	135	59	26	11	8	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	26	141	61	21	9	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	37	16	163	71	16	7	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	15	144	63	31	13	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	16	153	67	26	11	5	2
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)	48	21	149	65	14	6	7	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	20	149	65	24	10	8	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	20	134	58	30	13	10	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	13	140	61	25	11	13	6
The school is led and managed effectively	55	24	142	62	11	5	8	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	29	133	58	14	6	6	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Honiton Community College, Honiton EX14 1QT

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection, particularly for the friendly and open way in which you talked to us. Your college is good and improving rapidly. This is a summary of our main findings, although we hope you will wish to read the full report for yourselves.

- The progress you make in your work by the end of Year 11 has improved. It is now good and standards have risen and are average overall.
- The progress you make in the sixth form is improving in response to the good provision, although it remains satisfactory at present.
- Your behaviour is good overall and in many lessons we observed, it was outstanding.
- You work well in most of your lessons and the teaching is good.
- The college cares for you well and you feel safe.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the college and the wider community.
- The governing body, the principal and the other staff are determined to ensure that the college continues to improve quickly.

We have asked the college to improve two aspects.

- Teaching is good, but sometimes teachers use a narrow range of strategies to adjust the level of difficulty in the work you do to meet the varying needs of students in the group. We have asked the college to ensure that a wider variety of approaches is used. You can help by doing your very best in response to the approaches the teachers use.
- Although the progress made by sixth formers is improving, it is restricted by some students' limited study skills and by their uncertainty on how to act on teachers' advice on improving their work. We have asked the college to help students with these problems to overcome them so that progress improves further.

Thank you again for your involvement in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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