

Hartsdown Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136571
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	382288
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Metcalf

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1078
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Collins
Headteacher	Andrew Somers
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors over two days. They observed 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers across all subjects. Meetings were held with staff, students and the chair of the governing body. Inspectors observed the college's work and looked at a wide range of documentation and data including improvement plans, college policies, assessment data, safeguarding documentation and the governing body minutes. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 45 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- The attainment and progress of different groups of students, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in English and mathematics.
- The impact of specialist status on learners' outcomes, the work of the college and the engagement with the community.
- The impact of leaders at all levels in driving and securing improvement.
- How well provision in the sixth form meets students' needs.

Information about the school

Hartsdown Technology College is larger than the average secondary school, and has a designated hearing impaired unit for five students. A significant proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals and the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is very high. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average and increasing with significant numbers of students from migrant families, especially Czech and Slovak Roma. Mobility is high and approximately a quarter of the students joined the college since September. The college is designated as a specialist technology college and its accreditations include Enhanced Healthy Schools status, the Safer Schools Award and Investor in People status. The college became a National Challenge School in 2009, and an academy on 1 April 2011.

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

Hartsdown Technology College provides a good standard of education. Care, guidance and support, as well as engagement with the community, are outstanding. Under the inspirational leadership of the Principal and senior staff, as well as the increasingly competent and confident middle managers, the college has continued to secure improvements in external examinations. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has improved from 12% to 43% over the past five years. This is in spite of increasing rates of mobility and only three quarters of students undertaking all of their education at the college. The college confidently predicts the 2011 results to show further improvement.

The last inspection report described the college as good with some outstanding features, and the college has worked extremely hard to consolidate and improve upon this, with a particular focus on raising attainment in English and mathematics. The demanding targets of the National Challenge programme have been met and exceeded. Attainment remains low, but is improving rapidly as a result of staff stability, improved teaching, personalised programmes and better use of data. Progress is good for most students, and outstanding for hearing impaired students and those who speak English as an additional language. Provision and outcomes in the sixth form are satisfactory, but also improving as new staff are establishing their roles.

Students enjoy college and value the guidance and support they receive. Business partnerships are used well to introduce students to the world of work and build their self-esteem. As one student remarked, 'I won't be frightened if I meet a boss now.' Attendance has improved, with a significant decrease in the number of persistent absences. Students' behaviour is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and builds well upon the seven ethos values which permeate the work of the college and are highlighted in displays. The restorative justice system is used well to resolve conflict, and is having a positive impact on reducing exclusions. Students value the mixed-age tutor groups, which reinforce social cohesion and encourage differences in cultures to be shared and celebrated.

The quality of teaching is good, with supportive relationships between staff and students. Lesson planning is generally well considered and suitably identifies the complex needs of students in each class, but does not always successfully address those needs. Behaviour management is good and teachers' subject knowledge, as well as their understanding of examination requirements, is secure. Assessment and tracking systems are well developed so that all students know their target grades and what to do to meet them. Students talk confidently and positively about the support they receive from their teachers and their key workers.

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The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding and the college benefits from extensive links with local, national and international communities. Parents and carers speak highly of the college and its improving reputation, and feel it is led and managed effectively. Regular progress reports are valued. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding and the college is recognised as a beacon of exemplary practice.

Leadership and management are good. The Principal and senior staff have a strong commitment to improvement which is unequivocally shared by all staff. The college has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, gained through regular reviews. Staff questionnaires confirm that all staff feel involved in what the college is trying to achieve. The development and engagement of middle managers have ensured that the vision of the college is more broadly supported and widely implemented. Recommendations raised in the last inspection report have been decisively acted upon. The college has a good capacity to sustain further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment so that in GCSE and equivalent examinations in 2012, it is in line with the national average by:
 - Improve provision in the sixth form by raising attainment, improving teaching and consolidating provision.
 - improving teaching so that, by the spring of 2012, at least three quarters of lessons are good or better
 - ensuring that teaching takes account of the spread of ability and higher-attaining students are sufficiently challenged.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students' achievement is good. Attainment on entry to the college is very low, and in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Its external examination results represent good progress as a consequence of the focus given to English and mathematics, and the active promotion of literacy to support increasing numbers of students who speak English as an additional language.

Lesson observations, students' work and college data confirm that learning and progress are good. Learning was strongest in lessons where students' independence was encouraged and literacy skills challenged and supported. Students responded enthusiastically when learning opportunities took account of their prior learning and promoted their personal development. In satisfactory lessons, learning tasks did not always meet the needs of students sufficiently well. Learning was not checked to identify students who needed further explanation before moving on.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals make good progress. Students who speak English as an additional language, many of whom join the college partway through their secondary education, make outstanding progress as a result of personalised provision and support to develop their literacy skills. Students in the hearing impaired unit also make outstanding progress as a result of individual tracking and the excellent liaison between specialist staff and subject teachers. For example, in a one-to-one session on conversion graphs, a student made

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outstanding progress as a result of very effective planning and liaison with the mathematics department.

Students enjoy college, as reflected in attendance that is now broadly average and improving. They are aware of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise, as recognised in the Enhanced Healthy Schools status, but they still have a limited knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet. Students show respect for the needs of others and engage well with each other. For example, older students who speak English as an additional language mentor new students to the college.

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	4
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Teaching and learning are improving, with particular strengths in English and mathematics. The key characteristics of the highly effective teaching observed in many lessons included strong subject knowledge, excellent relationships and innovative resources which are regularly translated into different home languages. In a minority of lessons, the teacher talked too much and students became passive or disengaged, thus limiting their progress.

Assessment is good and students' attainment is prominently displayed in each subject area. Students have a good awareness of their target levels/grades and a good understanding of what they must do to meet them. Good use of peer- and self-

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assessment is commonplace, as seen to good effect in a Year 8 English lesson where it enabled students to identify their progress towards their set targets. All students, including one who had only been in the college for four weeks, knew their levels and what they needed to do to improve. In a small minority of lessons, planning is not yet sufficiently informed by assessment.

The curriculum is innovative. The Year 7 transition curriculum offers a suitable link between primary and secondary school, with a focus on the core subjects supported by cross-curricular projects. Different pathways allow students to personalise the curriculum and provide opportunities to take additional science, study classics or support the core subjects. There are good opportunities to develop literacy skills, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities have high rates of participation. The specialism contributes well to enrichment opportunities such as masterclasses, technology competitions and theme days such as the European Market.

Effective monitoring and targeted support are underpinned by the extended data collected about students' achievements and attitudes. Progress and learning are constantly reviewed and purposeful education plans produced where students are identified as underperforming. Students are known as individuals and their feedback confirms high levels of confidence in the school, especially with regard to future education and career choices. Transition arrangements are very well supported, with strong links to partner primary schools and other education providers. Students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are exceptionally well supported by teachers and assigned key workers. The college works very effectively with a range of external agencies to offer appropriate and ongoing support for such students and their families.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and middle leaders have worked determinedly to address the weaknesses identified in the last report. Attainment and progress have improved, especially in English and mathematics. Leadership is unrelenting in its drive to further improve the quality of teaching with regular lesson observations, ongoing feedback and sharing of practice recognised in the Investor in People status. The proportion of good and better teaching is improving quickly, although the college's judgements are slightly generous and do not provide sufficient detail for further analysis. Nevertheless, the development plan provides a manageable set of priorities, with clear timescales and success criteria, and data are used well to address underperformance and target interventions.

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The governing body is effective and actively involved in the strategic direction of the college. It enjoys wide representation from local business and the community, but not all groups of parents and carers. It ensures that safeguarding procedures are exemplary, with all policies regularly reviewed and ratified. The college offers training and support to other schools, and its practice is recognised through its Safer Schools Award. There is a strong appreciation of safeguarding amongst staff at all levels, including a 'safeguarding wall' in the staff room. Regular safeguarding assemblies deal with issues such as safety on the streets, cyber bullying and road/rail safety. Quality assurance procedures and risk assessment systems are outstanding.

The college takes good account of students' diverse needs. The use of Czech and Slovak speakers to engage parents and carers who are less confident speaking English confirms the college's commitment to supporting equal opportunities. Attendance rates at parents' consultation meetings are high.

The college has an acute awareness of the community it serves and is actively involved in a number of local initiatives including the New Year's parade, the Battle of Sound contest, work with the Turner Gallery and support for the Dreamland Project. Nationally, the college has supported anti-bullying week and Children in Need as well as raising money for, and awareness of, prostate cancer. International food days, supported by the specialism, as well as trips to France, Italy and Poland, and raising money to build a school in Kenya offer an international perspective to students' work.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Outcomes for students in the sixth form are satisfactory. Attainment is below national averages but improving. Attainment on entry is lower than in comparable sixth forms, and progress is satisfactory for all groups. Students feel safe and understand what is involved

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in a healthy lifestyle. They make a good contribution to the college through activities such as paired reading, the 'student voice', setting up charitable events and doing work experience in the hearing impaired unit. Retention rates are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Teaching in the sixth form is variable. The best lessons carefully match teaching to individual students' needs, but sometimes teacher talk dominates and students do not have the chance to develop as independent learners. Relationships are very strong and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Assessment is a strength and questioning is used to very good effect to check understanding. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson the teacher made excellent use of open-ended questions to encourage students in their responses. Questions were personalised to take account of the ability of the students, thus ensuring that they all made progress whatever their starting point. All students know their targets through regular progress reviews, although peer- and self-assessment are not used as effectively as elsewhere in the school.

- Curriculum programmes are broad and students feel that their needs are suitably catered for with a range of academic and vocational qualifications as well as enrichment opportunities such as street dance, jewellery making and indoor rowing.

Care, guidance and support are strong, with students benefiting considerably from the advice given regarding university applications and future choices. Transition in to and out of the sixth form is a strength, with three quarters of Year 13 students proceeding to university.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are relatively new in post, but they are reflective and have introduced a series of initiatives which have quickly identified and addressed underperformance in a number of subject areas, including geography and graphics. Assessment is used effectively to check that students are on the right courses. Mentoring is used to set inspirational goals. Safety procedures meet requirements and students know how to stay safe. Systems are embedded sufficiently to enable further improvement, but the actions taken have not had time to have a full impact on attainment and progress.

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	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The Ofsted questionnaire was returned by only a very small minority of parents and carers. Of these, a very large majority felt that their child enjoyed college and the college kept them safe. They said that the college met their child's needs well, that teaching was good and that the college was well managed. Almost all parents and carers felt that the college kept them informed about their child's progress, but a small minority wished for

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more help in supporting learning. A very small minority commented about unacceptable behaviour and this was mirrored in some of the comments received. Many positive comments were received about the care and guidance offered to students as well as the commitment of staff in supporting students. The views expressed were followed up, and although largely endorsed by the findings of the inspection team, behaviour and the management of any incidents arising were judged to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hartsdown Technology 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 960 students registered at the college.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	38	22	49	3	7	3	7
The school keeps my child safe	21	47	19	42	3	7	2	4
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	60	17	38	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	51	16	36	4	9	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	19	42	20	44	3	7	2	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	38	18	40	5	11	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	38	21	47	4	9	2	4
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)	22	49	17	38	1	2	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	49	18	40	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	38	20	44	5	11	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	47	17	38	3	7	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	22	49	19	42	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	47	20	44	1	2	3	7

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	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.



8 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Hartsdown Technology College, Margate CT9 5RE

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for your welcome when we visited your college recently. We very much enjoyed the opportunities we had to meet with you. The discussions and responses to the questionnaire helped us to come to some important judgments about the college.

We concluded that your college provides a good level of education. Examination results are improving quickly and we were pleased to see the progress that you are now making in your lessons. We were particularly impressed with the improvements in attendance and hope you will continue to attend lessons and benefit from the education provided.

The quality of teaching is good and the care, guidance and support provided are outstanding. We were pleased to read your positive responses to the student questionnaire and to hear that you enjoy college, feel safe and value the college's support in helping you prepare for the future.

We have asked your teachers to continue to work on raising attainment and improving teaching. The college agrees that this can be done by making sure that lessons are adapted to meet the individual needs of students and by offering more challenge in lessons. We have also asked the college to improve provision in the sixth form, although we note that a start has been made on this.

You can also help by attending regularly, behaving well and working hard to meet your targets.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection and very best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf

Lead inspector

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