

Costello Technology College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116406
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	379252
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Rundle 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	1068
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Bode
Headteacher	Julia Mortimore
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 October 2008
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Rundle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Denbridge-Smith	Additional inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional inspector
Susan Thomas-Pounce	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 38 teachers teaching 38 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior or middle leaders, and paid short visits to a further three sessions. In addition, the inspection team made visits to a Year 9 assembly and withdrawal groups. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and evaluation records and development plan, safeguarding policies and a sample of teachers' assessments and planning. Meetings were held with three groups of students, representatives of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors conducted an analysis of 133 paper-based questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Costello Technology College is an average-sized secondary school with similar numbers of boys and girls. It has specialist status in technology. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly above average, as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs being supported through school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school because students make good progress to attain standards that are well above average. It is not yet outstanding as inconsistencies exist in the quality of teaching and links with parents and carers are underdeveloped.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership that has resulted in systematic improvements since the last inspection, including broadening curriculum opportunities. Staff performance and the quality of teaching and learning are managed well. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen and develop their strategies to engage parents and carers more in their child’s learning and overall development.
- Students’ attainment has been on an improving trend and is now significantly above average. They are increasingly using their literacy and communication skills in other subjects although the use of numeracy is less well embedded. Senior leaders have taken decisive actions to improve the rate of progress which is now good, particularly in English, mathematics and media studies.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with a very small minority being outstanding. However, this does vary as inconsistencies exist in the level of challenge and activities provided for students with different abilities and in how well students’ independence in learning is developed. In the most successful lessons, marking and verbal feedback ensure all students know how well they are doing and specifically how to improve further. However, this good practice is not sufficiently widespread.
- A small minority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed concerns regarding behaviour in lessons. Inspectors found students’ behaviour good in lessons and around the school and evidence shows that this good standard of behaviour is typical over time. Most students display very positive attitudes towards their learning and enjoy school.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2013, ensure that all teaching is at least good, with a higher proportion that is outstanding, by:
 - the consistent use of aspirational levels of challenge for all students
 - ensuring that all teachers plan specific activities that match the needs of different abilities in one class
 - enabling all students to take greater ownership of their own learning
 - ensuring all marking and verbal feedback make clear precisely what students need to do to improve.
- Strengthen and develop further the college's strategies to engage parents and carers more in their child's learning and development.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment has improved in recent years as a result of focused developments and is now significantly above average. Robust actions have been taken where individual students or subjects have been attaining below or in line with average. For example, work seen in lessons and the college's own monitoring data indicate a sharp rise in progress in the past year in media studies and humanities and students are now achieving well. Attainment in English and mathematics has increased steadily in the last three years; work seen in current students' books and their assessment records indicate this continues to rise. The rate of progress overall has been improving year-on-year and students now make good progress from broadly average starting points. Attainment on entry is rising. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress, as do those known to be eligible for free school meals, and these groups of students often attain better than similar groups nationally. Students who speak English as an additional language, together with lower-ability students, make good and at times rapid progress because of good-quality support. For example, highly effective one-to-one support for students at the early stages of learning English enabled them to access learning fully in science lessons. In one Year 7 English class, lower-attaining students have made rapid progress since joining the school and are now working at expected levels for their age. They have been enthused to learn and are rightly proud of their achievements. Most parents and carers are positive about the achievements of their child and recognise the good progress being made. As one said, 'The quality of education is excellent across the board. Each teacher has encouraged my daughter to achieve her full potential.' Students work well together in lessons and almost all listen respectfully to each other's input.

The recent focus on using literacy, numeracy and communication skills across subjects is starting to bear fruit. Good opportunities are planned into all subject schemes of work, although are not always transferred successfully into lessons, particularly for numeracy. Where this is effective, students display good reading skills, are confident to debate issues and can use their writing skills in a variety of

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situations. In one outstanding religious education lesson, students were given excellent opportunities to present and debate different beliefs about life after death and in one drama lesson students enthusiastically explored and wrote plans for performances on teenage moral issues.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall, including for disabled students and those identified with special educational needs, resulting in good achievement. Relationships between staff and students are very positive. In the large majority of lessons teachers have high expectations and develop students' independent learning and critical thinking well. In successful lessons teachers use their knowledge of students' prior learning well to set challenging tasks that match the needs and aspirations of students with different abilities in the class. In outstanding lessons students are encouraged to take risks and responsibility for their own learning, including asking pertinent questions of the teacher and each other. However, this is not consistent. At times teaching is pitched at only one level so that lessons lack aspirational challenge and work is not always adapted to match students' needs. As a result, some students are over dependent on adults and do not take sufficient ownership of their learning. Consequently, their progress is not always rapid enough. Most teachers use effective questioning to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the subject well. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and in the best lessons expect students to respond with in-depth explanations, correct subject terminology and to expand each other's initial ideas.

Students of all ages know their targets, referred to as 'good performance levels/grades', and what they are aiming to achieve over the year. School monitoring information indicates that most students are on track to achieve or exceed their targets. On a few occasions, staff miss the opportunity to review and increase individual student targets at an early stage to increase motivation and challenge. In the best practice, written and verbal feedback references students' targets very effectively so they understand the quality of their work and the specific next steps that they need to take to improve further. However this is not consistently applied in all lessons. Students have good opportunities to evaluate each other's work using clear assessment criteria. Students are quick to identify this as an interesting and informative approach to identifying how to improve their own work further.

The curriculum enables students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge well. For example, in design and technology, art and geography, students researched different countries taking part in the Olympics, and used the Olympic values as stimuli for flag making and to compare economic and social benefits of hosting the event. Parents, carers and students are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching in the school.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

A small minority of the parents and carers who returned a questionnaire expressed concerns about lessons being disrupted by bad behaviour. However, inspectors found that students behave well in lessons and when they move around the college, and evidence indicates that this is typically the case. Expectations of behaviour are high and students understand what constitutes good behaviour. As a result, a calm and purposeful atmosphere is created and students are confident that the college provides a safe and secure environment that enables them to learn and be successful. Most students and staff say that this good behaviour is typical. Occasionally, small groups of students drift off task in lessons but this tends to be when work is not challenging enough or teachers do not enforce high enough expectations of engagement. Leaders have taken concerted actions to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions although it remains above the national average. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based harassment, and say that bullying rarely occurs. The school has secure procedures for dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour with few students reoffending.

Students are polite, courteous and keen to do well. They engage positively and productively with each other and staff. Most say they feel safe in school and parents and carers agree. Leaders have created an inclusive college where students look after each other well. They want to be in school, and so attendance is above the national average. Students have increasing opportunities to feed back their views on provision.

Leadership and management

The strong leadership of the headteacher has driven improvements since the last inspection. Senior leaders are unafraid to tackle difficult issues where necessary to bring about rapid improvements. The shared vision and increased monitoring responsibilities of all leaders inform accurate self-evaluation and lead to a collaborative approach, continuous improvement and good capacity to improve further. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that occasionally the evaluation of new initiatives does not focus sharply enough on the impact in terms of students' outcomes. The governing body is organised effectively and fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors understand their responsibilities for ensuring the safeguarding of students and staff and procedures are secure. They provide effective support and insightful challenge to leaders. The school has effectively increased the opportunities for communication with parents and carers. However a small minority of those that returned questionnaires indicated they would welcome more help in supporting their child's learning and being kept informed of their progress and development.

The curriculum has been broadened successfully with a greater range of vocational courses and alternative provision to match increasingly the needs and interests of students. Effective links have been created with other local schools and colleges to extend opportunities further. The on-site Diploma course in hair and beauty has been

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particularly successful in engaging students. Effective actions have been put in place to close gaps in achievement, to secure equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination. The curriculum and extra-curricular activities support the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and links created between subjects ensure that students are increasingly able to apply their basic skills across the curriculum. Leading teachers take an active role in the development and improvement of the quality of teaching across the college with professional development targeted successfully at college priorities. Staff have opportunities to share good practice through departmental reviews and peer observations. However this good practice is yet to be embedded securely with all teachers and subjects.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

22 June 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Costello Technology College, Basingstoke RG21 4AL

Thank you for your help and for talking to us during the recent inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and seeing your work. I am writing to tell you about our findings.

Your college provides you with a good education. It has brought about improvements since the last inspection. You have more opportunities in the curriculum and your attainment is now significantly above average. The headteacher and other leaders provide a strong lead which is raising the expectations and aspirations of everyone. You are very positive about the college and its work. Although some of your parents or carers expressed concerns about behaviour, inspectors found it to be good in lessons and around the college. You and the staff say behaviour is typically good and incidents are dealt with effectively. You told us you feel safe and well cared for.

You experience good teaching overall and consequently make good progress. We have asked the school to improve two main areas. The first is to ensure that all teaching is at least good, with a greater proportion that is outstanding, by making sure that all teachers:

- use consistent and aspirational levels of challenge
- plan activities specifically matched to the individual needs of all students
- enable you to take greater ownership of your learning
- provide marking and verbal feedback that are of the best quality.

The second is to strengthen and develop further their strategies to engage your parents and carers more in your learning and development.

We encourage you to listen and respond positively to teachers' comments and we hope that you continue to enjoy school and sustain the high standards that you reach.

The inspection team wishes you well in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector

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