

Pilton Community College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136867
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	397483
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Simon Rowe

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Ryder
Principal	Louise Miller-Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Simon Rowe	Additional inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional inspector
Louise Sharples	Additional inspector
Phil Taylor	Additional inspector
Judith Goodchild	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 38 lessons and 35 teachers. There were also two learning walks which involved another eight lessons. Joint observations were carried out with the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with students, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation document, development plan, records of lesson observations, achievement data, and the latest attendance and exclusion figures. The inspection team also scrutinised questionnaires completed by 517 parents and carers, 90 students and 100 staff.

Information about the school

Pilton Community College is larger than the average-sized secondary school and is a specialist language college. The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

A new principal took up post in September 2010 and there has been a new Chair of the Governing Body since the previous inspection. The college converted to academy status in July 2011. Since the previous inspection, the school has received the Healthy Schools Plus award and International School status.

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 college. Since her arrival, the principal has transformed the college in a short amount of time. The senior leadership team provide strong support to the principal and there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, the standard of behaviour and the achievement of students. The college is not yet outstanding as aspects of teaching and learning are not applied consistently to raise achievement further.
- Students' achievement suffered a dip in 2011 but this has now been rectified. Students are making better progress than students nationally. The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good and gaps with the national averages have narrowed.
- The quality of teaching has improved considerably and is good. The development of teaching is well led. In the best lessons, students made good and sometimes outstanding progress. Teachers use high-quality questioning to assess and deepen students' learning and provide work that is challenging. In satisfactory lessons, there are often limited opportunities for students to work independently and with their peers. In addition, the work does not always meet the needs of all students.
- Students were respectful and courteous throughout the inspection. Discussions with students indicate that behaviour has improved over the last two years, the result of high expectations on behaviour by staff and clear consequences.
- Senior leaders have led many new initiatives and have raised expectations. They are working alongside middle leaders to model and coach them in their development and practice. This is already having a positive impact but will take more time to embed and make a real difference. Performance management is used effectively to maintain the standard of teaching and achievement. The curriculum is good. It has been developed and is reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of all students. However, not enough has been done to ensure a consistent approach to developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring that teachers implement planning effectively to meet the needs of all students
 - providing regular opportunities in lessons for students to take responsibility for their own learning through independent, peer and group work
 - developing a consistent approach to extending students' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good. Achievement dipped in 2011 and much of this was due to staffing issues in key subjects that the new principal inherited. She successfully addressed these issues and ensured there were raised expectations in relation to students' outcomes. The targets that students, middle leaders and teachers are set, alongside the improved quality of teaching and behaviour, are resulting in good achievement. Students make the best progress in lessons when they are suitably challenged, are able to get down to work quickly and are given the opportunities to think for themselves through independent, group and peer work. Most parents and carers feel their child is making good progress, as do the students. Inspectors agree with their views as the progress observed in lessons, in students' books and from the school's data, is consistently good and sometimes outstanding.

Students enter the college with levels of attainment that are broadly average. They are making better progress than students nationally given their starting points. As a result, their attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average. Groups of students, including those with disabilities or with special educational needs, are also making better progress than similar students nationally. The attainment of different groups of students has improved and is continuing on a rising trend so that gaps have narrowed significantly.

Teachers have received professional development to ensure they meet the needs of students with disabilities or special educational needs in the classroom and, as a result of this, these students make similar progress to their peers in lessons. There is targeted intervention in Year 7 to develop students' literacy, including reading, and communication skills to provide them with the skills to be able to access the curriculum and to achieve their potential. Transition arrangements into Year 7 for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are well established and enable these students to engage fully with their learning on entry to the college.

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Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers and students feel that teaching is good. This is also the view of inspectors. The senior leadership team provides clear direction and professional development on improving teaching and the impact of this is evident in the classroom. There is much good and some outstanding teaching. In the best lessons, teachers use assessment data to plan teaching activities that provide an appropriate level of challenge for the whole range of students' abilities within the class. This ensures that the needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs are planned for effectively so they are able to make similar progress to other students. Lessons proceed at an appropriate pace, which maintains students' engagement. Teachers are skilled at using high-quality questioning techniques to assess students' understanding and deepen their learning. Relationships are strong between teachers and students and between students and each other. There are regular opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and to work independently, in groups and with their peers. They respond well to activities that challenge them through problem-solving and investigational approaches. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson, students were given a challenging problem which they had to derive an effective strategy to solve. The teacher provided the students with some key points but students then worked in groups to discuss and explain their thoughts and ideas on how to approach the problem. They challenged each other's ideas and anticipated possible issues. Through these discussions, they demonstrated determination and perseverance, a thorough understanding of mathematical concepts and outstanding problem-solving skills.

In less effective lessons, there is often too much input from the teacher, which leads to a lack of pace. There are limited opportunities for students to work independently and with their peers, to take responsibility for their learning and to practise new concepts. Teachers plan work to challenge all abilities within their class but this does not always materialise in practice. There is a lack of challenge for the more able and limited support for those that need it.

Assessment is regular and students are aware of their target levels, their current working levels and what they need to do to improve. In an information and communication technology class, students receive an email from their teacher at the beginning of each lesson to inform them of how well they have done in the previous lesson and what they need to do to improve. This allows students to begin work immediately and independently on entering the classroom and they are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are good. The college has implemented clear expectations and consequences about behaviour, which have led to an improvement in students' behaviour and attitudes. Students indicated in meetings with inspectors that behaviour had improved since the new principal had arrived because there is a clear

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understanding of the expectations. Students commented that they feel safe. Attendance has improved and is now above average. Exclusions have decreased significantly.

Students are typically polite, considerate and courteous to staff and to each other. Relationships and students' attitudes to learning are key factors in the improved quality of teaching and students' achievement. There are many opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and the impact of this is evident in how well students respect each other and their teachers, in the high-quality learning environment that is apparent in classrooms and in their enjoyment of lessons.

Students are fully aware of different types of bullying and they know how to keep themselves safe. They indicated that, if bullying did occur, it was dealt with swiftly and effectively.

A small minority of parents and carers commented on some concerns over disruption in class and bullying incidents, as did a few students in their questionnaire responses. Inspectors did not observe any incidents of disruptive behaviour during the inspection.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good. Since her arrival, the new principal has provided outstanding leadership which has transformed the college. She has galvanised the senior leadership team, who share the vision and direction of the principal, and they are providing strong support. The senior leadership team model good practice, high expectations and are working closely alongside middle leaders to coach them in their drive to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. Achievement data are rigorously monitored and interventions are timely and effective, with clear lines of accountability for any perceived underachievement. Performance management processes have been developed to maintain the continued improvement.

Middle leaders are positive about the direction that the college is heading and share this vision. Departmental reviews have been implemented which ensure middle leaders are accountable for all aspects of their departments, especially with regard to the quality of teaching and achievement. Their practice has improved considerably but will take more time to embed and make its full impact.

Senior leaders have a very clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching. In the many joint observations carried out between inspectors and senior leaders, there was a common agreement on judgements, strengths and areas for development. There has been considerable professional development provided for staff to improve teaching and this has had a positive impact. The most effective practitioners are being used to coach other colleagues to improve their practice, and a learning coach is being appointed to develop further the quality of teaching.

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The curriculum has been evaluated and developed. A curriculum group, made up of staff volunteers, meets regularly to review the curriculum and it is constantly adapted according to each cohort to ensure their needs are met. The curriculum has a dominance of academic courses, which are appropriately supplemented by vocational qualifications. Links with a local college has enabled the college to extend its provision. This is an inclusive college and no student is disadvantaged in any way. There are regular opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Through its language specialism, students study different languages and cultures and there are many opportunities for students to travel abroad. The curriculum has strong intervention to develop students' literacy and communication skills in Year 7 to ensure they can access the curriculum. There are plans to extend this provision to all students in Key Stage 3. At present, the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is not wholly effective.

The governing body provides much support to the principal and they are beginning to challenge data on the college's performance as their understanding of it develops. The college's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

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 Pilton Community College, Barnstaple, EX31 1RB

Thank you for your help during the college's recent inspection and for taking the time to talk with us. I am writing to tell you about our main findings.

We judge your college to be good overall. The principal has made significant changes since she took over which have improved many aspects of your school especially the quality of teaching, your behaviour and attitudes and the progress you make, which are all good. Your attainment is above average by the time you leave school at the end of Year 11 and you achieve well.

You have noticed the improvement in behaviour and in the quality of teaching and you tell us you feel safe. You are very proud of your college, are courteous and respectful and show positive relationships in your lessons with your teachers and each other.

This is what we have asked leaders and managers to do to improve the college further.

- Raise your achievement further by:
 - ensuring that you all have work that challenges you in lessons
 - providing you with regular opportunities in lessons to take responsibility for your own learning through independent, peer and group work
 - developing a consistent approach to developing your literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

You can all help by continuing to behave well and contributing as much as possible to your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Lead inspector

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