

Hamilton Community College

Keyham Lane West, Netherhall, Leicester, LE5 1RT

Inspection dates 18–19 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The college offers an exceptionally caring, supportive and challenging education for all its students.
- Standards have steadily improved over the past five years and students make good progress.
- The college has highly effective strategies for tackling underachievement and raising aspirations. As a result, every student who left the college at the end of last year went on to education, employment or training.
- Students demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around the college.
- For many of those students who are new arrivals to this country the college provides a very good start to their life here.
- Students with special educational needs or disabilities receive an exceptional level of care and support and achieve at least as highly as other students.
- This is an improving school with a leadership and staff that show unfailing commitment to a diverse community of students with an unusually high level of mobility.
- Leaders, managers and governors have worked with teachers to ensure that the majority of students receive good or outstanding teaching at all times.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some students, who are beginners in English and receive intensive language tuition, are not moving into a wide range of subjects as quickly as their progress allows.
- The college's policy on marking is not always followed and so some students are not clear what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teachers do not encourage enough discussions and debate in the classroom in order to develop the students' thinking and speaking skills.
- In some lessons teachers' introductions to lessons are longer than necessary and do not allow students to move promptly into practising their skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons. Seven were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with the principal, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at break and during lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to two groups of students.
- The inspection team observed the college’s work and looked at a range of documentation including the college’s plans for the future, ongoing reviews of those plans and the college’s records of their observations of teaching. They also took note of the college’s records of the progress that students are making.
- The inspectors looked at behaviour logs and the college’s safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors took account of 66 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 67 responses to the staff inspection survey.
- Inspectors heard a group of students read on the first day of inspection and listened to students reading in lessons.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Renee Robinson

Additional Inspector

John Greevy

Additional Inspector

Mina Drever

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school. It does not include a sixth form.
- Hamilton Community College has an unusually high proportion of students in all year groups joining and leaving the college throughout the year. Over half of the total number of students who joined the college last year were newly arrived in the United Kingdom and spoke little or no English. Only one third of the students in the current Year 11 have been at the college since Year 7.
- Since the last inspection the college has begun an extensive rebuilding programme. Because of building work at the time of the inspection the college had a shortened lunchtime and an earlier than usual finish to the school day. This did not affect the number of hours of teaching that students received each day.
- Just over half the students are of White British heritage. About a seventh are of Indian heritage. The remainder are from a wide variety of heritage groups. Over a third of students do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students with families in the armed services) is well above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- Twenty students attend a variety of off-site provision for one to four days a week.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The college runs a breakfast club that caters for 50 to 60 students every morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' standards and progress by:
 - making consistent use of the college's marking policy to help students to identify clearly the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring that new students who are beginners in learning English are able to attend lessons in subjects such as drama, physical education and art as soon as their progress in the language allows.
- Improve teaching so that more lessons are outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers ask open-ended questions and make better use of individual students' spoken answers in lessons to create classroom discussion and debate for all
 - keeping teachers' introductions to lessons as short as necessary in order for students to spend the maximum time practising their skills and testing out their knowledge and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students arrive at the college in Year 7 with standards that are well below the national average. Others, over a quarter of the population, join the college at other times with generally low prior attainment and, particularly, low levels of English. From these starting points students make good progress. Of those for whom national data is available, more than expected achieve five grade C GCSEs or better including English and mathematics.
- Over time, attainment of students in English has fluctuated, reflecting the constantly changing college population. Even so, as shown by the college's robust assessment data, the general trend in students' attainment and progress in English over the past five years is an improving one.
- There has also been a steady and sustained improvement in the attainment and progress of students in mathematics and in science over the past five years. Results for mathematics examinations already taken in 2013 show that students' performance has improved significantly on the previous year.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make very good progress in all year groups and over the past three years have performed at least as well as other pupils. Information for this year suggests that the large majority are on track to achieve five good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics. Good use of nurture groups in Years 7 to 9 offers strong support to students with special needs.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium who are achieving at least five good GCSE's including English and mathematics has improved over the last year. The gap is rapidly closing between their attainment and that of other students in the college, and is now around 6% in the proportions attaining higher grades in English and mathematics. Their performance is now similar to that of students eligible for the pupil premium nationally. Year 7 catch up funding is used to support extra help with reading but it is too early to judge its impact.
- The one third of students who have English as an additional language are very well supported and make similar progress to other students. The significant number of students who arrive at the college with very little or no English make good progress. They are given intensive lessons in learning the language before they join their classes for other subjects. The college could, however, further improve their progress by moving them more quickly into lessons from which they could benefit early on, particularly physical education, drama and art.
- Students' achievement is particularly high in French and Art and Design, with a significantly higher proportion of good grades at GCSE than found nationally.
- Religious Education at the college has improved since a survey, conducted by an inspector in 2011, found it to be satisfactory. There has been a rapid improvement in the achievement of students in the subject, rising from 8% gaining a good GCSE grade in 2011 to 54% in 2012. The department has benefited from extensive training and the teaching that was observed and the work seen in students' books confirm the improvements found in the subject.
- Those students who attend off-site provision are subject to exemplary monitoring by the college's leadership. Every student is visited at least once a week, full attendance and detailed progress records are kept and all the students come to the college on a Friday where they attend key skills courses amongst other provision. All those Year 11 students currently attending

off-site provision have places in colleges for next year.

- The college uses early entry to some GCSE courses but this is only when the benefits to students are clear, such as the management of their time or raising their confidence in their abilities. Students are always given the opportunity to re-take early entry examinations if they have not reached their full potential.
- Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives and leave the college as self-confident and purposeful learners. In 2012, every student leaving the college in Year 11 went on to find a place in further education, on training courses or in employment.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers generally have high expectations of their students, who show a willingness to learn and a determination to do well. Lessons are well structured, with a good range of activities to match different abilities and ways of learning.
- Teachers successfully support the 12 to 15 students who arrive at the college each week, getting to know them and assessing their attainment level. Whatever the duration of a student's time at the college they are valued and challenged as learners while they are in the classroom.
- Teachers set challenging mid and long-term targets and their students have a clear understanding of their goals and their progress.
- In the very large majority of lessons seen during the inspection students made at least good progress and there was no inadequate teaching. In the best lessons students were completely engaged in texts, problems and activities that interested and challenged them. In a Year 10 drama lesson, for example, students cleverly improvised dialogue around a complex relationship, showing strong emotional commitment; and in two highly practical and engaging physical education lessons, featuring javelin throwing and cricket bowling technique, students were observed responding very positively to challenging targets.
- The teaching of literacy was explicit in most subject areas, with the visual prompt of a 'reading wheel' and 'writing wheel' in every classroom. These aids helped students to choose appropriate strategies for tackling a text. The students who were heard reading during the inspection showed confidence in reading challenging texts and were able to sound out and read unfamiliar words. They spoke enthusiastically about their reading and proudly showed inspectors their reading records.
- There was evidence from teachers' planning and talking to students that formal debates are sometimes held in lessons. However, not all teachers are yet sufficiently skilled in asking open-ended questions and developing informal classroom discussion, building on individual students' responses. As a result not all students make as good progress in developing their thinking and speaking skills as they could. In some lessons, too, teachers took longer to introduce a topic or problem than was required. This meant that some students became restless and wanted to engage in activities sooner.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to learning are generally very good and they have positive relationships with staff. During the inspection some low level disruption was observed in a very small number of lessons.
- Students feel free to express their views about the college and believe these are listened to and acted on. They feel safe in the college and understand the system of rewards and sanctions. In 2012 the college was used as an example of good practice in a recent national campaign in relation to pressures connected to extremism, terrorists and extremist groups (the *Prevent* 'Act Now' strategy). The Department for Education has commended Hamilton as the first school to embed this programme.
- Students have many opportunities to show leadership and take on responsibilities. In school an interview by a group of students often forms a part of a prospective member of staff's application and students organise and run the annual school open evening. In the wider community Hamilton students have successfully petitioned to improve road safety outside their school. In addition there are strong links with local primary schools through sports leaders organising a sports day each year for primary children and drama students taking productions into the schools. Links to the international community include a strong tie with an orphanage in Ghana for which students have continued to raise considerable funds and a link to a school in Kentucky that recently involved a live video interview with a U.S. senator.
- The college has clear and accessible behaviour and anti-bullying policies that are fully implemented by staff and well managed by students. Any bullying or racist incidents are logged and analysed but occurrences are rare and the college is a largely harmonious and happy place for students and staff. The college has a fair but rigorous five-stage behaviour management process called 'Settle to Succeed' that is focused on successful learning and has been created to meet the particular demands of a very mobile school population.
- Although the proportion of overall and persistent absences continues to be above the national average there have been year on year improvements in attendance over the last seven years. Procedures for improving attendance are very detailed, very comprehensive and very effective and the college works hard to include parents in the process. The rate of exclusions is low and falling.

The leadership and management are good

- The college receives a high quality of leadership from the principal, who is very ably assisted by a dynamic and hard-working leadership team. They use their energy and expertise in a continuing drive to improve outcomes and support for their students. He is also supported in this by the local authority, which offers well targeted training and appropriate advice and guidance.
- The college is clearly committed to tackling underachievement and uses the funds from the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding to target and overcome barriers to students in fulfilling their potential. Part of the funding has been used to employ 'active mentors' who work closely with the most vulnerable students, supporting their attendance and giving guidance on their progress.
- The college's evaluation of its own performance is accurate and based on strong evidence, including the senior leaders' judgements of the quality of teaching in the college. The overall system for managing the performance of teachers is outstanding.

- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the college and are full of praise for the efforts it makes to educate and care for their children. The half-termly Parent Forum is well attended and has given very positive feedback on communication with the college, including the introduction of communication via Twitter as well as the more traditional channels.
- All aspects of safeguarding are addressed, with a robust system for checking on and recording students' safety and welfare. The local authority offers good support and monitoring of safeguarding practice.
- Students commented positively on the college's breakfast club, saying that it helped them "to get to school on time" and appreciating that it was run free of charge.
- There is an efficient and effective system for making sure disabled students and those with special needs are quickly identified and supported in their learning. There is a strong commitment to inclusion across the college, with a focus on meeting individual needs. One parental letter concerning a disabled student commented, 'She has gone from a child who would cry when she had to go to school, to a child who loves going to school, who embraces everything that is taught to her'.
- Three curriculum pathways are designed for different levels of ability, tailored to the needs of the students and highly individualised where appropriate. Students move frequently between these levels as they progress. In Key Stage 4 they are able to study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects such as separate sciences, law, land management and construction.
- Since the last inspection the college has done a great deal to make the students' experience of school more memorable, such as the use of Skype to conduct a joint concert with a school in South Africa, which was clearly a moving experience for students, staff and parents alike. There are frequent visits to cultural venues such as The Globe Theatre in London and citizenship and democracy are actively explored in visits to the Houses of Parliament and to the European Parliament in Brussels.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is well organised and governors are well led and well trained. Four key committees look at the work of the college and all report back to meetings of the full governing body. In this way all governors have a complete picture of the college and are able to make informed judgements. This includes an in-depth understanding of information relating to students' achievement as well as the fulfilment of all statutory requirements. The governors offer both support and challenge to the principal. The governing body closely monitors the quality of teaching, including lesson observations and discussions with staff. They are also well informed and active in the college's performance management of teachers. This includes the accelerated progress of some staff on the pay spine. The Chair of Governors has overseen a prudent handling of the college's finances and there is a healthy contingency available when required. The spending of the college's pupil premium funding has been carefully managed and its impact evaluated.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120285
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	412256

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	980
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Chimley
Principal	John Morris
Date of previous school inspection	9-10 June 2010
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