

Uckfield Community Technology College

Downsview Crescent, Uckfield, TN22 3DJ

Inspection dates 17–18 July 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| | 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.

- Attainment is high and the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is increasing and significantly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in the core subjects is high and the 2012/2013 results are on track to improve further.
- Teaching is good with an increasing proportion of lessons that are outstanding. Relationships are strong and teachers show considerable concern for the welfare and well-being of students in their care.
- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. They are confident and enthusiastic. They say they feel safe in school. Attendance is improving and exclusions are falling.
- The Principal, his senior leadership team and other leaders have a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. Development planning is well focused and the college has successfully concentrated on eliminating inadequate teaching.
- Students' literacy skills are promoted well across different subjects. A wide range of opportunities are provided for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Governors are highly ambitious for the college. They ask challenging questions of leaders concerning attainment and progress.
- Provision in the sixth form is good. Students are well guided and benefit from teaching which is of a consistently high quality.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The proportion of students exceeding expected progress in the core subjects is not high enough.
- Lesson planning does not always take sufficient account of the wide spread of ability in the class.
- The setting of homework varies and opportunities to develop independent learning skills are missed.
- Leaders do not make sufficient use of available data to find and respond to trends in the attainment and progress of groups, subjects and key stages.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and this affects some students' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 54 lessons or part-lessons including 13 joint lesson observations with senior members of staff. In lessons, inspectors looked at the work of students and discussed their learning and progress.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students in all key stages including Year 11 students who had already left the college. They looked at samples of their work focusing on attainment, progress and assessment.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle managers and other staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and spoke to the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 226 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 96 responses received from the questionnaire distributed to staff.
- They looked at a range of documentation including students' attainment and progress data, performance management records, lesson observation proformas, governing body minutes and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Paul Metcalf, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Jason Hughes | Additional Inspector |
| Simon Hughes | Additional Inspector |
| Andrew Lyons | Additional Inspector |
| Stephen Williams | Additional Inspector |
| Veronica Young | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Uckfield Community Technology College is a very large community comprehensive college with specialisms in technology and applied learning. There are no students who attend alternative provision at other educational sites.
- Most students are White British and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for students in receipt of free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children from service families, is well below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium is low. At the time of the inspection, there were small numbers of looked after children and no service family students in the college.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement and the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - lesson planning is more closely tailored to the needs of all students
 - homework is regularly set to encourage independent learning skills
 - marking provides all students with feedback on how well they are doing and what to do to improve their work.
- Make better use of available data to find and respond to trends in students' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the college with attainment which is well above average. In Key Stage 3, attainment in English, mathematics and science is consistently high. In Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2011/2012 was well above national averages. In 2012/2013, the college anticipates further improvements as a result of the relentless focus on improving teaching.
- Students' progress in Key Stage 3 varies. By the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students making three levels of progress is good in mathematics and English. The proportion of students exceeding three levels of progress is good in mathematics but less so in English. Moderated data for 2012/2013 suggests that this gap is on course to narrow so that progress is good overall. Good progress is evident in lesson observations, work samples and discussions with students.
- The college has worked to address underperformance in science and languages through external support, regular observations and individual support for teachers with stronger performance predicted in 2012/2013. Attainment in art and technology remains strong. The college has entered small numbers of students early for GCSE examinations in the past, but only when this has been appropriate.
- Students in receipt of the Year 7 catch-up premium and those eligible for pupil premium funding now make similar good progress to their peers' measured against average points scores as a result of the college's focus on students' literacy skills and the provision of individual and small-group work. The attainment of eligible students was a half grade lower in English and mathematics than that of their peers in 2011/2012. The gap in attainment is being reduced over time.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those speaking English as an additional language, make good progress because of the college's focus on teaching and learning as well as the use of data to identify and quickly support any underperforming students.
- Literacy skills are well supported across the curriculum. Plans to develop numeracy across the curriculum are well underway with links already established in science and history.
- The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form and retention rates into Year 13 are below the national average as the college offers an inclusive sixth form with significant numbers of one year, Level 2 courses. Attainment is average and better for A2 than AS-level courses. On the basis of their attainment on entry, this represents good progress. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or work and significant numbers of sixth form students proceed to good universities to continue their education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving. There is an increasing proportion that is outstanding especially in English and the performing arts. Students confirm that lessons observed were typical of lessons over time. The college has eradicated inadequate teaching through a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation using lesson observations, work scrutiny, progress data and learning walks. Where teaching is not good or better, staff are supported with individual meetings, personal development plans and individual mentors.
- In the most effective lessons, planning is used well to identify and address individual needs. Teachers make use of their strong subject knowledge to structure the learning, identify suitable resources and design activities focused on making sure students achieve well. Questions are used to check understanding and decide when to move the lesson on. Supportive relationships and high expectations contribute to a positive climate for learning.
- In a Year 12 music technology lesson, the planning was thoughtfully sequenced and suitably structured. Questioning was used to very good effect to challenge students' thinking, support

their assessment and help them appreciate what they must do to improve. Resources and activities were well matched to students' abilities, supporting their participation, creativity and enthusiasm.

- Where teaching is not as good, teachers do not always plan their lessons to take account of the spread of ability in the class. These lessons are often too focused on what the teacher is doing with less attention given to students actively learning in pursuit of good progress. The quality of homework varies and opportunities for independent learning, decision making and research skills are sometimes missed.
- Teachers undertake regular assessments and make use of these to check students' learning and progress. Students know their target grades and these are suitably collated in their planners. Marking is inconsistent. The best marking was seen in English and technology where students entered into a dialogue with the teacher about their work and what they needed to do to improve. In other subjects, students were not shown how they could improve their work.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, are well supported by the college's intense focus on literacy and strong supportive relationships between teachers and students.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium and pupil premium funding receive good support from their teachers and learning assistants. Learning assistants, where they are deployed, contribute well to teaching and learning and are reducing the variation in experience for different groups of students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students enjoy their learning and they work hard. Their attitudes are good, and they behave well in lessons and around the college. Most parents, carers and staff who responded to questionnaires consider behaviour to be good. Discussions, as well as behaviour records, confirm that this is typical over time. Students are confident and enthusiastic. They listen well to one another showing respect for different opinions and viewpoints.
- Attendance is improving but remains average. The proportion of persistent non-attenders has also fallen as a direct result of the college's focus on attendance supported by the 'Motivation and Personal Development' staff who have supported individual students and their families.
- The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has fallen dramatically in 2012/2013 as a result of the college's behaviour management policies. The college has excellent procedures to secure the well-being of students whose personal circumstances may make them vulnerable to poor behaviour or attendance.
- Students are actively involved in a wide variety of charitable and awareness raising events, in conjunction with the school council, including Cancer Research, Parkinsons UK and the Demelza House Children's Hospice. Sixth form students provide reading support for younger students and help out with revision classes in mathematics as well as running a 'young Leos group' in conjunction with the Uckfield and District Lions club.
- Students feel safe and secure at the college. There are strong arrangements to secure the safety and well-being of students, especially those potentially at risk of underachieving. Students are very knowledgeable about the different forms that bullying can take. Strategies have been extremely successful in raising their awareness and promoting a respect for students from different social and cultural backgrounds. Equal opportunities are well supported by the college.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because some staff and parents still express concerns about behaviour and bullying. This is confirmed by students who say that low-level disruption still occurs in lessons and behaviour management is not always consistent.

The leadership and management are good

- The vision of the college to 'Realise Potential' is shared with staff, students, parents, carers and governors. The senior leadership team, supported by other leaders, has a very clear view of the

strengths and weaknesses of the college.

- Development planning is well focused but leaders do not always make use of available data to find trends in the attainment and progress of groups, subjects and key stages, and compare these to external expectations. College leaders have rightly concentrated on successfully dealing with the underperformance in science and languages as well as robustly tackling inadequate teaching.
- The sixth form is well led and students comment positively about the care, guidance and support which they receive.
- The college benefits from the light touch support provided by the local authority.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium has been appropriately spent on providing one-to-one tuition and support for students' reading. Pupil premium funding has been used to provide additional support for students' literacy and numeracy skills as well as fund the provision of additional learning assistants and pay for additional meetings to review students' progress and evaluate the impact of support.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers are rigorous and have contributed successfully to the eradication of inadequate teaching. The college seeks to link lesson observations, college data, students' views, and the work in students' books to an overall view of how well teachers are performing, which is tied in with any salary increases.
- The college's curriculum is broad and balanced. The college responds quickly to the needs of its students and there is a wide range of both academic and work-related qualifications on offer as well as extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. The sixth form curriculum provides a large number of academic courses as well as a selection of Level 2 courses. The curriculum is enriched with support for charities and involvement in human rights organisations.
- In formal lessons and the wider curriculum, students are given a range of opportunities to reflect on and prepare for life in Britain and beyond. For example, lessons on the holocaust encourage students to reflect on issues such as prejudice and discrimination.
- The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is a real strength of the college with opportunities promoted through assemblies, religious studies and personal, social, citizenship, health education lessons.
- Parents and carers are engaged in a variety of ways including parent support evenings, monthly parent surgeries, regular parent questionnaires and an active parent-teacher association. Responses to Parent View and the college's own questionnaires corroborate parents' and carers' confidence in the college and verify that their children feel happy, safe and well looked after. The college offers extensive support to neighbouring schools and is actively involved in community projects such as the Uckfield Festival.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are knowledgeable and perceptive. They have a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the college as a result of their training, especially in appreciating data. They have a very good awareness of the quality of teaching across the college as a result of their college visits, frequent updates and regular feedback from staff at the governing body meetings. The governing body holds the college to account for examination results and is not afraid to ask challenging questions in its pursuit of excellence. Governors have a growing awareness of how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium are spent and the impact they are having on students' progress. They are well aware of the college's policy on performance management and the links between performance, teaching and progress. They know how the school rewards good teachers and tackles any underperformance. They regularly review statutory policies and make sure that safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 114590 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 412074 |

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

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| 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 | 1,680 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 337 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Adrian Brown |
| Principal | Hugh Hennebry |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6–7 May 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01825 764844 |
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