



Castleford High School Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108273
LEA Wakefield
Inspection number 277939
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Julie Price Grimshaw HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Ferrybridge Road
School category	Community		Castleford
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		West Yorkshire WF10 4JQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01977 605060
Number on roll	1263	Fax number	01977 506070
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bill Clift
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr R Vaughan

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006	Inspection number 277939
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Castleford High School Technology College is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school with 1,263 pupils on roll. Almost all pupils come from the immediate area. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The school's population is largely white British with a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school was awarded technology college status in 1996.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Castleford High School is an improving school; inspectors agree with the school's judgement that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils make adequate progress during their time at the school, and although there has been underachievement in some subjects, the school is taking appropriate steps to address this. The majority of teaching is of satisfactory quality, with the remainder being good or better. The school cares for its pupils well, and particular attention is paid to the needs of vulnerable children. The school works well with external organisations to promote the well-being of learners; however, form time and assemblies are not always used effectively, and there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness. The school provides a good range of curriculum activities, well suited to the needs of learners, and there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

Overall, leadership and management are good. The headteacher, appointed in September 2005, is clearly committed to improving the quality of provision and has already taken steps to bring about positive change. The school's self evaluation is accurate, and shows a thorough understanding and awareness of strengths and weaknesses. Technology college status has had a positive impact on the work of the school overall and resources are deployed appropriately. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Recently implemented strategies designed to bring about rapid improvement in key areas are taking effect, and the school demonstrates the capacity to make the necessary further improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' attainment, particularly in the core subjects.
- Implement effective strategies to ensure that all teaching is of at least good quality.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, standards are below average but progress is satisfactory in both key stages. The number of pupils gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE is lower than the national average; however, progress is satisfactory given the relatively low starting point of many pupils. Pupils perform particularly well in physical education at Key Stage 4, and this accurately reflects the outstanding teaching, learning and planning seen in this subject area. The school has recognised the need to improve standards in the core subjects and has acted quickly to raise performance, particularly in Years 9 and 11. Consequently the standard of pupils' work has been raised in English, mathematics and science and results are set to improve in this year's tests and examinations. The school is now using a range of data well in order to set challenging yet realistic targets for pupils, and there is increased focus on what pupils need to do in order to raise their attainment. Pupils progress at a satisfactory rate including those

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the higher attaining pupils. Boys do not achieve as well as girls but the systems put in place by the school are succeeding in narrowing the gap. This is confirmed in lessons, for example, single-sex booster classes in English where boys and girls are specifically targeted and resourced.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The promotion of pupils' personal development is good and a considerable strength of the school. This, combined with a wide range of enrichment activities, makes a significant contribution to pupils' overall progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. There is mutual respect between teachers and pupils but there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness. The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Attendance is a little above the national average and this reflects the pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for school life. This is further reflected in the high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities. Pupils feel safe and secure at school. An appropriate and largely successful range of anti-bullying strategies have been implemented, and pupils know how to get help in resolving any difficulties. Physical education has a high profile throughout the school, and pupils are encouraged to adopt an active and healthy lifestyle through their involvement in sports activities, both in lesson time and extra-curricular. The fitness suite is well used by many pupils before and after school. The school is aware of the need to develop more effective ways to encourage pupils to choose healthy food. The school council is effective in promoting responsibility and involvement. A good range of activities is in place to ensure that pupils experience the world of work. The interaction between the school and its community is mutually beneficial and enhances pupils' personal development. Excellent arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils' transfer from primary to secondary school is smooth and non-threatening.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The majority of teaching in the school is satisfactory, with some examples of good and very good practice. Most lessons are well-planned and have good pace, and clear learning objectives establish a sense of purpose. Lessons often include a good range of motivating tasks, and as a result pupils enjoy productive work, usually in pairs and small groups. However, pupils are not always given the time to explore the links between the tasks they are doing and the lesson's learning outcomes. The most effective lessons include opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and reflect on their learning; examples of this exemplary work were observed in physical education and drama lessons. Such lessons provide excellent models to help improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. In some lessons learners are too passive.

Teachers monopolise the talking and this reduces the pupils' enthusiasm. Relations between teachers and pupils are good; pupils have confidence in the reliability of their teachers' subject knowledge and in the guidance they receive.

Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Although some marking gives helpful feedback on strengths and weakness, other marking is too imprecise and infrequent. Pupils know how well they are doing in terms of grades or levels but are not always clear about how to improve their work further and achieve their targets; the school has recently started to place greater emphasis on this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's leadership team has worked successfully to provide a wide range of personalised learning programmes for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are confident that the range of vocational, academic and off-site courses suits their needs well; the number entering further education and training is increasing as a result. There is good provision for the development of information and communication technology skills. In Years 7 to 9 the school provides an appropriately amended programme for more vulnerable pupils. This effectively supports their transition in terms of both their social development and their learning. Pupils' learning is enriched by a very good range of extra curricular activities including sport, the arts, visits and after-school classes. The school's leadership maintains a sharply evaluative approach to the curriculum. It has rightly identified the need to assure a more coherent coverage of personal, social and health education and religious education in Years 10 and 11. It has formulated strategic plans to achieve this by September 2006.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well; all staff are clearly committed to the promotion of a safe and supportive school environment. Procedures for child protection are comprehensive and include regular training for all staff. The school actively seeks ways to improve what it provides, for example, by increasing the amount of time available for the school nurse to support pupils. Outside lesson time, the 'Stepping Stones' area offers a comfortable and safe haven for those who feel more vulnerable. A specialist advisory teacher provides valuable help with life skills for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The school also provides education for deaf and hearing impaired pupils across the local authority; a number of specialist instructors and support staff effectively meet the needs of these pupils. A strong pastoral system supports academic progress and personal development. The needs of individual pupils are carefully considered by the school, and parents and carers are fully involved in helping their children to make progress. Pupils are prepared well for leaving school, for example, through the work of Connexions advisers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The recently appointed headteacher and all members of the leadership team share a corporate vision for the future of the school. There are secure procedures in place for the monitoring of teaching and learning across the school, and consequently school managers have a sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses in these areas. Recently introduced systems, based on the sharing of best practice, are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and of middle management across the school.

The school governors are very committed to the school; as well as carrying out all statutory responsibilities they are actively involved in many aspects of school life, such as acting as mentors for pupils. An achievement and standards sub-committee was set up last year specifically to support and monitor the strategies deployed to raise attainment. The governing body provides encouragement to staff, but also challenges and questions ideas and proposals as appropriate.

The school gathers the views of parents and carers on a regular basis through surveys conducted by an external agency. This information is used well in order to bring about improvements. Parents value the school's immediate response to any concerns they may have.

The quality of improvement planning is good; the school has identified appropriate strategies for addressing shortcomings and raising attainment, linked to clear success criteria. The school is keen to use the expertise of external agencies, such as consultants from the local authority, in their quest to improve the quality of provision and raise standards. The school clearly demonstrates the capacity to make further improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for sharing your views with us. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

We think that Castleford High is a satisfactory school with some good features. We believe that the staff care about your personal development and are very committed to supporting you during your time at school. There is a wide range of subjects and courses, and this means that each one of you can follow a programme of study that suits you best. We were very impressed with the range of extra-curricular activities, and pleased that so many of you make the most of this - as some of you said to us, 'there's something for everyone!' We noticed that most of you behave really well, both in your lessons and around the school.

You told us that the lessons you enjoy most are those that involve lots of practical activities and interactive learning. We think that all of the teaching in your school is at least satisfactory, but we have asked the staff to think about how they can make further improvements so that all lessons are at least good. In particular, we think that it would be helpful if lessons included more opportunities for you to reflect on what you have learnt, and focus on what you need to do to improve your work further.

In the past, some of the exam and test results have been disappointing. The school managers believe that you are capable of achieving better results, and we agree with them. Staff have started to work towards helping you to do this, but you have an important part to play, too; we would like you to work even harder, especially in mathematics and English.

Mr Vaughan has not been in post for very long, but we believe that he and the other school managers have already started to make some changes that should help you all to make better progress. We and your teachers want you to achieve your full potential and make the most of your time at Castleford High.