



# Cromwell Community College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110869  
**LEA** CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 278540  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs. Maureen York LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Wenny Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		PE16 6UU
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01354692193
<b>Number on roll</b>	1041	<b>Fax number</b>	01354695952
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr.A Garraway
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. G Roberts

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278540
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Cromwell Community College is a comprehensive school situated in a rapidly developing area of Cambridgeshire. It has a rising roll which currently stands at 980 pupils aged 11 to 16. In September 2005, it began to deliver post 16 courses in partnership with a neighbouring college and there are 58 pupils in Year 12. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are 11 who have English as an additional language. The numbers of pupils with special educational needs is just above the national average while those eligible for free school meals is below. Attainment on entry is in line with that found nationally.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory education overall and some aspects are good. There has been good progress on most of the issues identified at the last inspection and there is good capacity for the college to improve further. It is well managed at a senior level and recent training is leading to improvements in middle management. The principal has quickly gained the respect of staff and pupils and this is a happy community with a renewed sense of purpose. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the best lessons pupils are stimulated to think hard and apply their knowledge and understanding effectively but in less effective lessons they are only required to sit and listen. This limits pupils in their ability to test and develop their skills fully. The pupils' behaviour is good and they are polite and courteous in lessons and around the college. Care and support is good and pupils feel safe. There is a strong sense of community which is evident in the range of activities and opportunities available to the pupils and the high levels of take up. Most pupils make good progress. Achievement and standards at Key Stage 3 are above the national average. However, although the performance at GCSE has recently improved, it remains below the national average. The college accurately identifies the areas it needs to improve but information on the pupils' performance is not always used effectively. The college is developing consultation with the pupils and they feel that their views are taken seriously. The parent questionnaire produced support for the school although some parents felt that communication could be improved and that older pupils were not sufficiently challenged. The curriculum provided is good and recent changes, particularly at Key Stage 4, mean that it is now better matched to the pupils' needs and interests. Planning for the new post-16 provision is good. Financial management is good and value for money is satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure greater consistency in the use of performance data across the college.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to participate in lessons and to develop their confidence as learners.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Overall standards are satisfactory. Pupils enter the college with standards in their Year 6 tests which are in line with the national average. They make good progress, and by the end of Year 9 their attainment is above average in the national tests, and their achievement is good. By the end of Year 11 achievement is not as good as it should be and as a result is unsatisfactory overall. There is variation in performance across subjects and in the last year the learning of some pupils has been disrupted by difficulties in recruitment and retention. As a consequence weaker performance in some subjects has had a significant impact on the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C. However, the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-G

passes is above average and their achievement in all courses offered, including those with other partner establishments, is satisfactory and performance is closer to that found nationally. The results in 2005 are a good improvement on those of the previous year but the college did not meet its overall targets and the progress of pupils from year 9 to year 11 is unsatisfactory. The college's targets for 2006 are well founded on the analysis of individual pupils' performance. Senior managers have identified the college's areas for improvement and are taking the necessary action. The college's evaluation is more effective because there is a more thorough monitoring of pupil progress in years 10 and 11. There are also changes to the curriculum which allow for more regular evaluation of performance in the core subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good and the college provides a supportive and inclusive environment where pupils feel safe. There are good opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility and many of them act as mentors for those in lower years. They make a contribution to college life through the Year councils and formal consultation with them is improving. For example they were asked to describe what would be a good 'Cromwell lesson' and this is incorporated into the policy on teaching and learning. However, teachers do not always plan effectively to ensure pupils' active participation in lessons. The majority enjoy school and attendance is in line with the national average. The Learning Support Unit makes a very good contribution to helping those pupils who find conforming in lessons most difficult and they value the help they receive. Pupils have a positive approach to learning which results in good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. There have been no permanent exclusions for four years, although there has been a rise in fixed term exclusions for a few pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular pupils develop a strong sense of purpose and mutual support. They get on well with one another. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection and cultural horizons are broadened with a good range of extra-curricular visits, such as a Year 11 trip to New York. There are sufficient opportunities for pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and there are many opportunities to play sport and take exercise. Work experience placements prepare pupils well for the future, and overall the school's contribution to economic well-being is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory overall and the senior managers are accurate in their view of the strengths and weaknesses across the college. During the inspection some good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching was seen. This was characterised by teaching which challenged pupils and involved them in their learning. Where the very best teaching takes place, it is clear the pupils have full confidence in their teachers because

they come into lessons knowing, from experience, that their learning opportunities will be rich and productive. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and the majority are keen to do well. There has been good consultation at all levels, including with the pupils, as to what makes 'A good Cromwell lesson'. As a result teachers are clear about which areas to improve. Where teaching is less effective there is too much direction from the front and the pupils are not encouraged to use their initiative. This means that, although well behaved, pupils sit rather passively in lessons and their response is limited. The college's senior management has recognized the need to improve learning and teaching, particularly to raise standards in Years 10 and 11. The college's new policy focuses on the importance of encouraging good learning experiences for all pupils. There is an understanding that standards are raised by improved teaching strategies and more rigorous assessment. This is not always used effectively to evaluate pupils' performance and as a result there is variation in the use of target setting.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The college curriculum is good. It has been reviewed and significant changes introduced at the beginning of this year mean that it is now better matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. It has responded to its review of personal and social education and this, together with Citizenship, is now offered as a discrete subject. This provides greater coherence and consistency. The college is also working closely with the Fenland Partnership to provide pupils at Key Stage 4 with a broader range of opportunities and GCSE options. Some pupils are able to follow vocationally based courses and this provides them with a better balanced curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported. They have individual plans which mean that their progress can be monitored and arrangements for an alternative curriculum have improved this year. Following a review by all subject departments good opportunities are now provided for work experience. Pupils are well prepared for this and for most it is a positive experience. It helps them to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the world of work. Pupils have good access to careers guidance and there is a strong take up of a wide range of sporting and cultural activities, including residential visits abroad.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. Pupils are well cared for by a committed staff and this makes a contribution to the good progress pupils make in their personal development. There are effective procedures to identify pupils who may be at risk of under-achievement and pupils' progress is monitored and reviewed. Arrangements for the safeguarding of all pupils are robust and the college follows required procedures for child protection, health and safety. Study coaches and support staff provide good additional support for some pupils and this makes a good contribution to their progress and achievement. There are very supportive relationships between tutors and year groups; pupils feel safe and valued. They feel able to talk

with teachers if they are worried about anything. The college provides good quality information and holds regular discussions with pupils which help them to make accurate curriculum and career choices. Pupils benefit from links with employers and visiting speakers who provide good opportunities for them to develop their problem solving skills.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the college are good and changes introduced over the last year lead inspectors to believe that it is well placed to improve further. Most of the issues raised by the previous inspection have been resolved. However, the college recognises that standards at Key Stage 4 need to be further improved. The reflective leadership of the principal has focused the school on raising standards and the planning to support this is clear and coherent. Priorities for improvement are manageable and there are action plans to support them, although the timescales are not sufficiently tight. Senior managers regularly review departments and because there is now more rigour staff are concentrating their efforts on improving the right things. In addition the revised performance management system has introduced more accountability. As a result managers at all levels feel more confident to challenge and support colleagues in developing their practice and improving their performance. The majority of subjects are well led and departments are concentrating on improving areas linked to the college priorities. Senior staff give a firm lead and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is careful analysis of information gained from monitoring and evaluation although the use of performance data is not yet sharp enough across all departments. There is too much inconsistency in the practice. The recent teaching and learning policy is used to inform the monitoring of lessons and feedback to teachers is helpful and well judged. Pupils feel that teachers now challenge them to improve their work and all of those spoken with knew their targets. The majority of responses from the parents' questionnaire were positive although a few parents feel that the pupils in higher years could be challenged more. The college acknowledges that communication with parents could be improved. Governance is good. The governors support the school well and share the vision for the college. The governing body is well organised and informed. Financial management is good.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

As you know your college was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you the results of that inspection. First of all I would like to thank you for your co-operation and assistance during our visit. You were polite and courteous and you all looked extremely smart. You are a credit to your school. There are many things that your college does well and we think that there have been many improvements in the last year. You are happy to come to college and your behaviour in lessons is good. Most of you take full advantage of the range of extra activities available to you and the information that you are given helps you to make good choices about courses. There are good opportunities for you to take part in your college through the year councils and you said that teachers listened to your point of view. You told us that you feel safe in the college and that you are able to discuss anything which may be worrying you. We agree with you. Your college gives you good support and the teachers are committed to providing you with a variety of experiences. Cromwell Community College is a happy place and you all get on well with each other. There are some things which we feel could be better. At the moment more of you need to get good passes at GCSE. We think you would achieve better if you were more actively involved in lessons. Too often you are expected to sit and listen. We want your teachers to make you think and discuss your ideas more often. The college has recently asked you for your views as to what makes 'A good Cromwell lesson' and they have taken account of your views. In the best lessons we saw you gave thoughtful answers and had time to discuss your ideas with others. Now we hope you will continue to work with your teachers to get more involved in all lessons. We are confident that the college can continue to improve and wish you well in the future.