



Launceston College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112037
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278831
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Redpath HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Dunheved Road
School category	Community		Launceston
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Cornwall PL15 9JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01566 772468
Number on roll	1363	Fax number	01566 777371
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Barbara Sleep
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr Alan Wroath

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	278831

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Launceston College is a specialist technology college of larger than average size. Students are drawn from the market town of Launceston and surrounding villages. Although the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average, the school's catchment area includes areas where incomes are low and there is significant deprivation. Almost all students are of White British origin and are fluent in English. The college provides an area resource base for 15 students who have special educational needs. Almost a quarter of students attending the college have learning difficulties and disabilities which is higher than the national average. The college provides a wide range of community education. Building work has begun to update some of the accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Launceston College provides a good education for its students. The college uses its specialist status as a technology college very effectively to foster strong links with local industry, the community and other schools. These links broaden the curriculum and extend students' learning.

Good teaching enables students to make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 3. The high standard of teaching in mathematics across the college produces consistently high examination results. Students have positive attitudes and behave well. They enjoy coming to school and a high number participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs. Students' personal development is good, although the arrangements at lunch time do not encourage students to view eating food as a positive social experience.

Provision in the area resource base for students with special educational needs (SEN) is of a very high standard. Students have good opportunities for inclusion with the rest of the school which ensures they have access to a broad curriculum. However, arrangements do not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum since these students do not currently study a modern foreign language (MFL). Monitoring of the impact of initiatives and the support given to students with SEN in other parts of the college is underdeveloped.

The college has addressed all the areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher and senior managers are an effective team who have an accurate view of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Evidence gathered during the inspection suggests the college is systematically addressing the main areas for further improvement. The senior leaders and committed staff demonstrate a strong capacity for ensuring further improvement. Some parts of the accommodation are cramped, although the college uses resources well and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form provision is good and students achieve above average standards in their advanced (A) level and vocational examinations. Students take part in a wide range of activities both in college and the wider community which promotes their personal development. Students are confident and outgoing and form very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Students appreciate the extensive support and guidance they receive. The sixth form is led and managed well and there are good links with other schools and colleges. Some of the accommodation is limited and there are too few opportunities for students to use the library for individual study.

What the school should do to improve further

- monitor more thoroughly the impact of initiatives used to help students with SEN and the support they receive
- ensure all students are taught a modern foreign language

at Key Stage 3 • consider the use of accommodation to improve arrangements for students at lunchtime and to provide more opportunities for individual study for sixth form students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Good teaching with a clear focus on raising achievement enables students to make good progress. Students start in Year 7 with average standards. In Key Stage 3, students make good progress and by the end of Year 9 their attainment is usually higher than the national average. Standards are particularly high in science and mathematics.

At Key Stage 4, the pace of improvement is slower. It is at least satisfactory and good in several subjects. By the end of Year 11, students' grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) are broadly average. Results are consistently high in mathematics, physical education (PE), history, geography, technology and vocational subjects. Results are generally lower in science subjects. The school has taken steps to improve the performance of students in science which are having a positive effect on raising standards. Students make good progress in the sixth form and achieve above average results in A level examinations and in the vocational courses. Students are set challenging targets and know the areas they need to improve. Girls perform better than average across the school, particularly at Key Stage 3. The performance of boys has fluctuated in recent years and is currently slightly below average. Students with SEN make satisfactory progress. The progress of some is limited since the college does not monitor thoroughly the impact of the various initiatives used to help them. Students who attend the area resource base make very good progress in their academic learning and in developing their independence and social skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students is good. Students enjoy being at school and report that they feel safe and respected. They behave well, have positive attitudes and work hard. Their attendance level is above the national average.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students improve their self-esteem and self-confidence when they take part in sports and joint music and drama productions. Students develop social skills and learn how to get along with their peers. Year 7 students speak highly of an activity day which develops trust and builds friendships. Students' awareness of different cultures is enhanced through the art and citizenship curricula and the college's links with a multicultural school in London. Students learn to take responsibility and feel they actively influence what happens in school through the year and school councils. Sixth form and Year 11 students support others lower down the school, for example, when they act as 'sports leaders' or peer mentors. They also make a positive contribution to the community through the strong links with other schools and businesses, work experience and enterprise opportunities. Students develop suitable skills for adult life and are well

prepared for the world of work or further study. Students are aware of the need to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle, although the arrangements at lunch time do not enable all students to sit down to eat and enjoy each other's company.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good across the school, particularly in Key Stage 3 and in mathematics. Because of this, the students learn well. Lessons range from outstanding to satisfactory and students speak warmly of the expertise of their teachers. Some have said that teachers treat them as 'grown-ups' and as one student commented "good teachers make you feel like they are just teaching you." When this happens, students become interested in learning. Students' work is generally well planned and marked and there is clear evidence that learners are challenged to think creatively and encouraged to speculate and think beyond the obvious. This was seen in science lessons when students conducted experiments and in English when they retold real life stories. Teachers capture students' interest through making learning highly paced and exciting. Information and communication technology (ICT) is often used well to present topics and for students to conduct individual research. In the few lessons where students are less well challenged, chatting results and learning slows down.

Assessment is used well to plan lessons and students are informed of their targets for future work. Students generally understand how they can improve their work and discuss this creatively with their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it offers courses which suit students' interests and aptitudes. Provision at Key Stage 4 includes GCSE subjects, vocational and work-related courses. Sixth form students choose from a wide range of A level subjects and vocational courses. ICT is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum. As part of the college's technology status, intensive technology days have been provided and strong links established with many other institutions.

The curriculum in the area resource base for students with SEN is of a high standard because it is carefully adapted to meet students' specific educational needs and to help them develop their independence and self-confidence. There are good links with the main school which ensure students have access to a broad curriculum. However, the opportunity to study an MFL is not currently provided.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular provision including sport and arts-related clubs, sports leader qualification, extra help sessions and additional subjects for GCSE study. These activities are very well attended and enrich the lives of the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college provides good care, guidance and support for its students. Excellent links with external agencies enable the college to draw on expertise to support students' emotional health and well-being. Provision for vulnerable students is well organised. There are thorough arrangements in place for child protection and for dealing with any incidents of bullying. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are successful with almost all students. However, exclusion is used relatively frequently as a means of managing some pupils. The success of this approach is not demonstrated by the college, although it is aware of the issue and has plans for developing alternative strategies. Well planned induction activities help new students settle in quickly when they join the college. Older students receive appropriate advice to help them choose optional subjects and make career choices. Sixth form students appreciate the guidance they receive on further and higher education courses. This has been particularly effective in helping several students gain places at top universities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior managers are a strong leadership team and have a clear vision for the future direction of the college. Staff share this vision and concentrate their efforts effectively on raising achievement and improving the personal development of pupils.

The college has a good knowledge of its main strengths and weaknesses and evaluates its performance systematically. Recently improved systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning within departments and the progress of pupils are good in almost all areas. Monitoring of the impact of initiatives and the support given to students with SEN is underdeveloped. Good support to develop the roles of subject leaders has been particularly effective, for example, in improving the quality of teaching and learning in science. The college has successfully extended the role of teaching assistants to improve support for individual students. Induction procedures for new staff are good and enable staff to settle in quickly and adopt the school's high expectations. The college uses resources well and in view of students' good academic progress and personal development it provides good value for money. The college demonstrates a strong capacity for further improvement.

The college manages the specialist school status very well and has successfully engaged local industry, the community and local schools in its future development. The college also seeks the views of parents and takes action as a result. The vast majority of parents are happy with the work of the college, although a few have concerns over the standard of pupils' behaviour.

Governors have good knowledge of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They are playing an increasing role in evaluating and reviewing its effectiveness. However, the

college has rightly identified the need to develop its role in providing further challenge and support.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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

Dear Students

As you know, your college was inspected on 11 and 12 January 2006. I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your college. I thank those of you who helped with the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life in the college. Many of your parents or carers returned a questionnaire and we also took their views and concerns into account when making judgements.

Here are the main points:

- Launceston College provides you with a good education
- becoming a specialist college has helped the college to offer a wider range of technology and vocational courses
- you behave well, enjoy coming to school and take advantage of the many after-school clubs and activities
- teaching is good which helps you do well in tests and examinations
- you do particularly well in Years 7 to 9 and in mathematics
- those of you who attend the resource base are helped very well to improve your learning and develop greater self-confidence; although you also need to have the chance to study a modern foreign language
- the college needs to check more closely how some of you who have difficulty with learning are being supported
- lunchtimes need to be better organised so you have a more pleasant and sociable time when eating your food. You can help by making suggestions, perhaps through the school council
- those of you who are in the sixth form need better opportunities for individual study.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Redpath HMI (Lead Inspector)