



Ivybridge Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113541
LEA Devon
Inspection number 279196
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Stuart AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Harford Road
School category	Community		Ivybridge
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Devon PL21 0JA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01752 691000
Number on roll	2300	Fax number	01752 691247
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Treve Mitchel
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Geoffrey Rees

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	3 May 2006 - 4 May 2006	279196

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ivybridge Community College, with over 2300 students including 420 sixth formers, is one of the largest schools in the country. It serves an extensive area of South Devon, and many students come from areas outside its main catchment area. Despite its size and growth in recent years, it is oversubscribed. The college became a specialist Sports College in 1997, and achieved a further specialism of science in 2004. Very recently, it has added languages as a third specialism, and is also a Training School. Students come from a wide range of circumstances, reflecting the mixed nature of the area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average, and the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ivybridge Community College is an outstanding school. It very successfully maximises the enormous range of opportunities that the wealth of staff expertise and excellent facilities provide. It succeeds equally in making students feel that they belong and are important as individuals. One student said of his teachers, 'It's easy to excel as there are so many good role models.'

Standards by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form are exceptionally high. Students' achievement is outstanding because, in most lessons, they are very well taught, with very effective procedures to track their progress. Overall, teaching and learning are outstanding. When teaching is first-rate, students respond extremely well. Their relationships with their teachers and between themselves are excellent, showing respect and care for each other. Only rarely, and usually linked to less effective teaching, does students' behaviour drop from its normally high standards.

High achievement is also promoted by the outstanding curriculum which meets students' needs very well. Particularly impressive are the international dimensions of the curriculum and the range of extra-curricular opportunities. Equally outstanding are the links with primary schools which get students off to a flying start when they arrive.

The college has continued to improve substantially since the last inspection. It has the capacity to get even better because the exceptional and remarkable leadership of the principal, supported by an excellent senior team, has created a shared sense of purpose at all levels amongst teaching and non-teaching staff. This encourages innovation, research and a continuous quest for excellence. As a result, there is strong leadership and management at all levels, including the highly successful development of specialist college status. Specialist status has brought very considerable benefits, especially in the enhancement of the curriculum and the college's facilities. The vast majority of the large number of parents who returned the questionnaire are very pleased with the school and made very few critical comments. The college's evaluation of its effectiveness is sharp and accurate. Inspection evidence supports the college's judgements and the college gives outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding, and provides a rich curriculum and overall educational experience for very large numbers of students very effectively and efficiently. Inspection evidence supports the college's judgements about its sixth form. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent and have contributed substantially to improving performance and achievement, which are now exceptionally high. The systems used to check the progress of students against their predicted targets ensure that they do not fall through the net. The college has created in the sixth form a safe, supportive and challenging environment in which the vast majority of students flourish and mature as fine young people.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no areas where significant improvement is needed, but the college should continue to strive to eliminate the small amount of less effective teaching and inappropriate behaviour.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high. This is because students make exceptionally good progress from standards on entry that are marginally above average. There are many reasons for this, including much first-rate teaching. The exemplary contacts with primary schools ensure that students get off to a very good start as their individual needs are very well known. Throughout their time at the college, there are very effective systems, using high quality data, to track students' progress. There are very strong supportive procedures for all students. A particular strength of the college is the overall consistency of performance across all groups of students, from the most gifted and talented, through those of average ability, to those with learning difficulties and disabilities. In 2005, results exceeded the challenging targets that had been set.

Although overall results in 2004 and 2005 were very high, and have been steadily improving for many years, there have been some variations in the rate of progress at different key stages and different subjects. However, taking examples from two core subjects, it is clear from present work that the few relative weaknesses in English have been tackled very successfully, and standards in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, always above average but lower than several other subjects, are moving steadily forward.

The standards of students entering the sixth form are high in relation to those found nationally because most of them do very well in Year 11. These high standards are sustained and, very often, taken higher still because students respond very well to high quality teaching and the regular, very careful and thorough reviews of their progress. As a result, students achieve very well and, in many cases, outstandingly well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' outstanding personal development and well-being are reflected in their enjoyment of college life and their above-average attendance rates. They are proud of their college and are excited by the wide range of opportunities to develop their personal skills. Students feel encouraged to use their initiative to influence college policy. For example, in response to their requests, they have been closely involved in developing healthy eating policies, including having drinking water freely available. Large numbers of students of all abilities take up the opportunities offered to improve

personal fitness. They look to many teachers as role models and are inspired to emulate their success.

Students feel safe and believe there is always someone close at hand to help should a problem arise. They report that incidents of bullying are minimal and are nearly always swiftly dealt with. Older students take an active role in supporting those new to the college and students feel they are well known by their teachers, who will listen to them and support them. Behaviour is normally good and often excellent. There are only occasional instances of inappropriate behaviour, usually when teaching is less effective.

All aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Many make an active contribution to the community and volunteer for roles of responsibility, representing students' views on a variety of issues. They are very well prepared for successful economic well-being. Sixth form students effectively promote spiritual development in the college by devising relevant 'thoughts for the day'. They have also taken responsibility for organising a day of activities to promote team building and reinforce the sense of 'belonging'. Close partnerships with a school in Thailand and other opportunities to visit foreign countries and study different cultures further enrich students' experiences. Teachers and students respect and care for each other and many students emphasise how the college makes them feel part of a big family.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Overall, first class and challenging teaching leads to outstanding learning, with students thoroughly engaged in most of their lessons. Nearly all have extremely positive attitudes to learning. A very strong feature of teaching is the quality of the planning and preparation of lessons. This means that teachers have very high expectations of what students will achieve, and teaching is thoughtfully modified to meet the needs of students with different learning styles and different levels of attainment. For example, a class of Year 9 students who find learning difficult made outstanding progress in one lesson because constant challenge and encouragement by the teacher allowed them to investigate the construction of a robot in activities that they thoroughly enjoyed. In almost all lessons, classroom management and relationships are excellent. Students of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, enjoy their education and make excellent progress. Linked with the college's role as a training school, staff and students are frequently involved in research directed at improving teaching and learning. There is a strong and very beneficial culture of further training to improve the quality of teaching. Information and communication technology (ICT) is embedded across the college's curriculum, enhancing teaching and learning through, for example, the use of interactive whiteboards. The very effective use of performance information to monitor students' progress and set targets as ways of raising

achievement is a strength of the college. As a result, students receive clear information about what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum starts with the very close liaison with partner primary schools to ensure that students begin Year 7 on suitable courses. This effective matching of students to appropriate courses continues throughout the college. It contributes to students' excellent progress and achievement and helps to eliminate disaffection.

Students have a very wide choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The range meets the needs of students very well. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are guided sensitively into suitable courses.

International links are an outstanding aspect of the college's curriculum. International visits and exchanges of students and teachers significantly enrich the curriculum. Similarly, there is a superb range of extra-curricular clubs, societies, visits and sporting and musical activities in which staff and students participate with considerable enthusiasm. The college's specialist status has had a major impact across the curriculum. It has enabled the college to develop sport in partner primary schools, to provide a vast range of sporting activities and to fund trials of new courses in science and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

An outstanding caring ethos is at the heart of the college. Support begins for students long before they enter the college as exemplary processes are in place to ease the transition to a college, which, being so large, could cause anxiety. However, students quickly adapt, being supported by trained older students who act as mentors. Senior students also receive training to act as mediators to enhance the support provided by the tutors and year heads. Academic progress is closely monitored and parents are kept fully informed. Effective child protection policies are in place. Vulnerable children and families are very well supported by a variety of outside agencies, co-ordinated by the student welfare officer. Profoundly deaf students say they feel special and are well cared for. Arrangements for the safety of students are very effective. For example, many students travel long distances to the college but the arrival and departure of transport is extremely well organised and supervised to ensure safety. The careers service and opportunities for work experience are outstanding, as exemplified by the Investors in Careers and Education and Business Partnerships awards over several years. Students in the sixth form, although given greater independence, feel that their work and progress are closely monitored. They value the high level of support and advice they receive in preparing for their future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The very high standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have improved still further. In addition, the college has maintained its position as a beacon of excellence both locally and nationally, now providing training for new teachers and other entrants to the profession. The reputation for excellence achieved through its innovative work as a Sports College and more recently its success in achieving specialist science and languages designations is a testament to exceptional leadership. The principal and senior leaders provide excellent direction for the college and have very successfully developed considerable leadership expertise at all levels of the school. The leadership is characterised by very high expectations of success and a belief in creating a safe and secure environment where every student belongs. This permeates the work of the whole college and is valued by staff and students alike.

The college has very robust systems for checking its own effectiveness and no stone is left unturned in its desire for continual improvement. Governors are very well informed, they hold the college to account and make an outstanding contribution to its continuing development. The devolution of leadership and management throughout the college gives responsibility to middle leaders and subject co-ordinators, but they are not set adrift because of the close support given by senior leaders. There is a very strong common sense of purpose amongst the staff and there is a very clear focus on raising students' achievement. An excellent example of this is the work of the learning forum, a regular meeting that enables leaders at all levels to share good practice and evaluate their own and others' work.

The college has a very accurate understanding of its considerable strengths and minor weaknesses, and it regularly consults students, parents and others within the community it serves about its provision and future developments. The leadership of the college is very well placed to continue to deliver the highest quality of education for the young people at the college.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

It was a pleasure to spend two days in your college and, on behalf of all the inspection team, I thank you very much for your help and friendliness.

We believe that Ivybridge Community College is outstanding. It manages very successfully to bring you the benefits of its very large size and lets you feel that you belong to the place as individuals. This means you can enjoy excellent facilities and have on the staff a large number of people of very high quality with an enormous range of talents and skills. At the same time, the excellent way the college is organised and run also means that your individual needs are very well catered for in a caring and supportive way.

Most of you are proud of your college and you greatly enjoy your time at there. You want to get the most out of your lessons and the vast range of opportunities available outside lessons. As a result, most of you are getting on extremely well in your work and in the ways you are developing as young people. Examination results are exceptionally high. One important reason for this is the high quality teaching you receive. Other important reasons are the excellent attitudes to learning that most of you have and the first-class way you get on with each other and with your teachers.

A great deal of the college's success and improvement has depended on the inspiring way your Principal has led the college for many years. His leadership is really outstanding, and he is excellently supported by his senior team and by other teachers and support staff at all levels.

Can the college get even better? Of course it can and, with your help, it will! We are asking the college to look at ways some of the teaching could be improved further, and a few of you need to make sure that you always behave with courtesy and consideration all the time. The college has a bright future ahead of it, and I know you will want to take full advantage of all the opportunities open to you. I wish you all good luck for the future.