



# Uplands Community Technology College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114591  
**LEA** East Sussex  
**Inspection number** 279420  
**Inspection dates** 18 January 2006 to 19 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Christine Jones HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Lower High Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		Wadhurst
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		East Sussex TN5 6AZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 782135
<b>Number on roll</b>	1051	<b>Fax number</b>	01892 782003
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr John Gordon
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Jayne Edmonds

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 18 January 2006 - 19 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279420
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Uplands Community Technology College is a large rural comprehensive college with a large and growing sixth form. Most students are White-British, with few coming from minority ethnic backgrounds or without English as their first language. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low and the percentage of students with special educational needs is below that in other schools.

Uplands has recently been re-designated as a Technology College and awarded an additional specialism in Performing Arts with English.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Uplands Technology College views itself as effective and improving and the inspection confirms this. There is a well ordered and purposeful atmosphere and students make good progress and achieve standards that are above average. This is because the leadership of the Principal is outstanding and she has built a strong team of senior managers who share her high expectations of staff and students. Evaluation of the work of the college is honest and accurate as it is based on detailed analysis and systematic monitoring. The outcomes are used to plan for and drive successful and rigorous improvements in teaching and learning.

Teaching is good and caters well for the different needs of all students, but some feel they are not always given enough consistent feedback in their work books on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Technology college status has led to considerable improvements in the number of computers available for students to use and greater impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on their learning.

Students behave well and have good relationships with staff. The college takes great care of the students and they are given very good guidance and support, especially those with extra learning needs. Opportunities for older students to contribute to decisions about college life are not as well developed as they could be. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and the college is in a very strong position to continue to improve further. It gives good value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Although the college judges that its sixth form is satisfactory overall, the inspection feels it is better than this and is good. The new, strong leadership is having a significant impact on improving the range of courses and creating better opportunities for independent learning. As a result, standards in 2005 were much improved over those in previous years. Students achieve well as a result of some very good and excellent teaching that enthuses and inspires them. Students are very active in organising their own participation in both college life and the local community, including a very popular annual revue.

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

Focus on: • Opportunities for students to be more actively and systematically consulted about decision making about the direction of the college. • Consistency in the quality of marking and feedback so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In Key Stage 3, the standards reached by students in the external tests in 2005 were well above national results. Standards improved significantly in English over those in previous years but they dropped slightly in mathematics and science, although still remaining above national levels. Students start in Year 7 with average standards and make very good progress by the end of Year 9. Girls make better progress than boys.

At Key Stage 4 in 2005, the percentage gaining five or more higher GCSE grades was well above average. In some subjects, such as mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, geography and science, results were much higher than in other subjects. Students made good progress, with only a small number not gaining a GCSE pass. In 2005 the college just missed its own challenging GCSE targets.

Students do well in the sixth form. Achievement is good, particularly in vocational courses. Standards in 2005 were satisfactory, in line with national averages and improved over those in previous years, although there was still some variation in standards between different subjects.

Students with special educational needs and those who are looked after do especially well and make good progress. The college works hard to make sure that they achieve as well as they can.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development is good. They come to school regularly and arrive at lessons promptly, reflecting the strength of parental support and students' enjoyment of college. This is also evident from the good level of recruitment into the sixth form.

Students have positive attitudes and generally behave well in lessons. Bullying is not seen as a problem by parents or students and lunchtimes are sociable and relaxed. Students say they feel safe and happy in college; one, for example, said "the teachers are happy and they make us happy".

The School Council gives younger students the opportunity to express their views, although older pupils are less involved. Sixth form students have their own, very active, committee.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. They learn to respect others and many are engaged in local activities such as organising fund-raising events for a variety of charities. Students develop good life skills through activities such as well-organised work experience placements. They speak knowledgeably about the need to stay safe, eat healthily and take regular exercise.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Recently the college has focused intensively on making teaching and learning even better. As a result there is now a common, agreed understanding of what high quality teaching should look like. The positive impact of this work is evident in many lessons where greater consideration is being given to students' differing learning needs.

Students learn well because in most lessons they know what they are expected to study and enjoy the variety of activities. They listen to each other carefully and respect each other's ideas and contributions. Teachers are increasingly skilful at posing questions to match students' abilities.

Teachers plan for practical, active work but some of them do not yet include enough in the lessons. Several teachers use the interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting and fun, although occasionally some teachers rely on it too much.

Teachers make good use of assessment information to ensure that work is at the right level. The feedback given to students in their books does not always contain enough advice about how they might improve their work. Books are mostly regularly marked but the quality of written comments is very variable, ranging from outstandingly constructive to bland and unhelpful.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum has been successfully overhauled to offer major improvements in vocational education. The college works hard to satisfy GCSE and sixth form students' wishes. A good number of Year 10 and 11 students have chosen to combine GCSEs with other courses and new subjects such as engineering and GCSE citizenship are particularly popular. Students more suited to work-related learning combine GCSEs, vocational courses and work experience and follow courses that interest them and will help them in future employment. The college's new performing arts specialism will widen provision in dance, drama and music.

Strong links have been developed with other colleges and higher education establishments to extend the range of learning opportunities available through off-site facilities, particularly in Years 10 to 13.

The sixth form curriculum is also undergoing a similar review. The range of courses is being extended, with more changes planned for next year. The choice of vocational courses at different levels is increasing and new areas of study, such as psychology and law, are popular. The college prepares students well for higher education or employment.

Provision for ICT has improved significantly; there are well considered plans for further development. The college runs a successful Youth Club on site and organises a reasonable range of extra-curricular activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The college takes outstanding care of its students. This is appreciated by the parents, who commented that “the college really seems to care about students as individuals”. Good support is given to students when they start college and when they make important choices about their future studies.

Form tutors and the strong house system provide students with a sense of belonging and give excellent support to vulnerable students. The Connexions personal adviser and the student counsellor play an important role in the identification and support of these students.

The management of the educational provision for students with special educational needs is excellent. The college is justifiably proud of the large number of students who have greatly benefited from this provision. The recently introduced ‘Opportunities After School In School’ (OASIS) programme is already having a very positive impact on improving the behaviour of disaffected students and, as a result, exclusions have dropped dramatically. There are effective systems for ensuring students’ health and safety.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The college is very well led by the Principal, senior leaders and governors. The relatively new Principal has brought to the college a determined focus on inclusion and raising standards for all students. She is a powerful influence on the positive direction of the college. The leadership team has honestly and accurately identified strengths and weaknesses and developed a good plan for improvement. Senior leaders along with academic and pastoral leaders are involved in systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Information from this, along with a detailed analysis of the progress students are making, is used well to judge where further improvements are needed.

Performance management and carefully planned training are used effectively to support staff in achieving the aims of the college. The college’s high quality review procedures have identified inconsistencies in the leadership of some middle managers which mean that students do not always make the progress they should in a few subjects.

The governors are knowledgeable and have a good understanding of what the college does well and how it can be improved. They use their expertise to challenge as well as support the leadership team effectively and value the Principal’s rigour, honest evaluation and determined pursuit of excellence.

The strength of the college's leadership now means it is in an excellent position to make the improvements it has identified.

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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>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
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	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<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	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	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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<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**

Dear Students

We visited your college on the 18th and 19th of January and I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made. We enjoyed our visit very much and it was a pleasure to talk to you about your life in college and to watch you enjoying your lessons. If you read our report it will tell you in more detail about what your college does well and how it could be made even better.

You are rightly proud of your college and we found it to be a good place in which to develop and learn. The main strengths are:

- You enjoy school, work hard and achieve good results
- Those of you with extra learning needs do especially well
- Your behaviour is good and you take very good care of each other
- You appreciate the good teaching that helps you to learn
- There are good relationships in the school between staff and students. You work well together and respect each other
- The college takes excellent care of you and you feel safe and secure
- The college makes sure that there are excellent opportunities for every one of you to achieve as well as you can.

We have made a few recommendations to try to make your good college even better.

We would like you to be more involved in making decisions about your life in the college. We would also like your teachers to give you more guidance in your books on how you can improve the quality of your work.

Thank you for your contribution to this inspection. You are a credit to yourselves as well as the college and your parents.

Dr Christine Jones HMI Lead Inspector