



Passmores School and Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115218
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279544
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Stephen Abbott LI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Tendring Road
School category	Community		CM18 6RW
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279 770800
Number on roll	736	Fax number	01279445515
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Harold Rush
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Kevin Sadler

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	Inspection number 279544
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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

Passmores School and Technology College is a smaller than average sized 11 - 16 community comprehensive school, situated in Harlow. The proportion of students that have reached the expected standard when they join the school in Year 7 is below average. Just over 15% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is in line with the national average. Nearly a quarter of students have been identified as having special educational needs, including 3% with statements of special educational needs. Both of these figures are above the national average. Less than 2% of students have a first language which is not English. The school has recently acquired technology college status and is a member of the 'Harlow Excellence Cluster'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Passmores School and Technology College is a good school which has improved considerably under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. The first step was to improve the ethos of the school. Students' personal development and well-being is now good and their enjoyment of school is obvious. They receive excellent care, support and guidance. Their moral and social development is very good but their cultural understanding and spiritual development are only satisfactory as the curriculum does not emphasise these aspects enough. Students' attitudes and the quality of teaching and learning have developed in tandem resulting in higher achievement in lessons and national examinations. However, standards in mathematics and English are below average and it remains a priority for all teachers to help students improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers have a good rapport with students. Most teaching is good but in some lessons students are not encouraged to think independently or to take responsibility for their learning. Recently recruited teachers, including several who trained overseas, have been given good training and support. They have quickly adopted the school's educational values. The curriculum provision is generally good. The range of learning pathways meets students' needs well but the role of religious education is under-developed. The headteacher has developed an excellent self-evaluation process that underpins good management. Inspectors agree with the school's view of its effectiveness. The school provides good value for money and knows how to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and English by a greater emphasis on the key skills of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning to help students think more effectively for themselves.
- Improve the use of assessment to guide lesson planning and self-assessment by students. The school will further develop the curriculum to include
- An improved spiritual dimension in lessons, assemblies and acts of worship.
- Sufficient lessons in religious education to cover the locally agreed syllabus.
- Fuller cultural development, particularly in students' understanding of cultures other than their own.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress during their time at the school. The standards achieved by students at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved considerably in recent years. In 2005 there was a sharp increase in the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, which is now above the national average. Students start Year 7 an average of six months behind the nationally expected standard. In Key Stage 3 they make satisfactory academic progress but this still leaves them a few months behind at the end of Year 9. However, they make very good progress in their personal development and this means they learn more effectively as they get older.

The school has also made strenuous efforts to improve teaching, learning and support in Key Stage 4. These two factors mean that students make good progress in many subjects in Years 10 and 11 and by the time they leave the school their results have caught up with national expectations. However, mathematics and English standards are still below average. Among the students who achieved five or more GCSE grade C passes in 2005, a third did not achieve C grades in these two core subjects. In previous years, some groups of students did not progress as well as others, notably boys underachieved markedly in 2003. However, in 2005 nearly all students had made good progress, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who are looked after by the local authority.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. They enjoy their school and take evident pride in it. For many students the school provides a core of stability in their life. The good relationships that exist between staff and students are a strong feature of the school. Members of staff are very committed to the students, supporting their learning and ensuring that they achieve and make progress. Students take advantage of this support, behave well in class and are eager to learn and help each other. The school has put in place very effective structures to support disaffected and challenging students and almost all students behave well. Vulnerable students are supported very well. Students feel safe and supported by staff and there is a strong focus on addressing bullying and name-calling. Students feel strongly that they have an adult to turn to if they have an academic or personal problem. They feel that effective action is taken once the school becomes aware of problems. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with strengths in moral and social development. The spiritual dimension of education is developed well enough in assemblies and lessons. Students' understanding of other cultures than their own is not sufficiently promoted. Nevertheless, the school works hard at developing student's sense of self-worth, confidence and aspirations. Students are listened to and their views considered. There are effective year and school councils. Students are able to contribute effectively to the school community. The school encourages a healthy lifestyle and develops students' skills in relation to their economic future but these aspects could be developed further.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have greatly improved since the last inspection. As a result students learn well and make good progress both academically and in their personal development. The school has made it a priority to help teachers improve their lessons and teaching is now good overall. Teachers know their students well and readily provide them with additional help. Most teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects.

This enables them to teach with pace and conviction, and gives students confidence. Most of the observed lessons were good and some were outstanding. The teachers planned carefully and used a variety of approaches to motivate and engage students. They included activities to build understanding and to make students think for themselves. Satisfactory lessons had less variety; the teachers gave students information and showed them what to do but gave them fewer opportunities to make sense of the work. Such teaching makes it harder for students to apply their knowledge, for example in literacy and numeracy. Assessment has many good features. Marking is generally good, with frequent references to National Curriculum levels and GCSE standards. Although some of the feedback is not specific enough, students report that marking helps them to improve. Students' progress is monitored well, and targets are regularly set and reviewed. Students are increasingly asked to assess their own and other students' work, but they need more help to do so accurately. The most effective teachers use assessment information in planning and adapting lessons to meet the needs of pupils, but this practice is not universal. The additional needs of learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, are very well catered for. A large number of students receive extra help, and benefit greatly from it. The school is encouraging parents to play a greater part in the education of their children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. It has improved significantly since the last inspection with four learning pathways clearly focusing on the needs and capabilities of learners in Key Stage 4. A broad range of courses in Years 10 and 11 meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. The partnerships with other schools and Harlow College provide a good range of options and vocational subjects. The 'Harlow Excellence Cluster' supports effective programmes for disaffected students and those at risk of exclusion as well as additional activities for gifted and talented students. However, more needs to be done to challenge able students in other lessons. The technology college status is aiding the development of skills for later life. Links have been made with local primary schools and the community, with projects such as the 'Silver Surfers' to encourage older people to learn to use computers. Students' spiritual and cultural development is hindered by the limited time given to religious education. The school is still planning how it will amend the curriculum to meet the new statutory requirements for work related learning and enterprise education. A good range of sporting, social and cultural extra curricular events and activities enhance students' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Staff know students very well and treat them with respect. Students feel safe in school and have trusted teaching and non-teaching staff who they can turn to if they have problems. Child protection procedures are very clear with good training for all staff. There are good procedures

for assessing risk and ensuring health and safety. Good links with community and local organisations add richness to the provision. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with students. Vulnerable students get good support. Representatives of outside agencies regularly meet with teachers and learning support staff as an 'inclusion panel'. The panel works exceptionally well to coordinate support and to ensure the wellbeing of children. The beneficiaries include students with learning difficulties and disabilities and children in public care. The learning support unit provides well for students who find it difficult to work in a standard classroom environment. All of which is monitored and managed very efficiently. Students are given good guidance on how to improve their work, set appropriate targets to achieve, and guided effectively in subject choices and for future careers. Their progress is closely monitored and discussed with parents, and clear targets are set for future performance. The school is strengthening links to parents beyond the existing reports and consultation evenings. There is a very strong programme of intervention to tackle under-achievement. The rigorous approach to ensuring that students complete coursework has had a significant impact on their examination results. Overall, the support for learners is excellent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management are good. The school has introduced effective and thorough methods to improve the education it provides, and the performance of teachers and students is regularly and carefully reviewed. Review weeks are set aside each term in which a department is reviewed in depth or issues significant for the whole school are carefully explored. These developments have resulted in considerable improvement in students' performance. Self-evaluation is outstanding and the capacity to secure further improvement is evident. Students' wellbeing is well promoted. Improvements have been made in the leadership of the year system. Equality of opportunity is well promoted, and there is a very generous range of support for all students who need it. The headteacher has inspired all these developments. His leadership is excellent, and extends beyond the school into the community, where a series of very useful links benefit the education the school provides. The school is well staffed. Teachers appreciate the training they receive, and also the positive, friendly and professional atmosphere. Generous provision of technological and computing equipment reflects the school's specialist status well. Accommodation is good; it is bright and very well maintained though an isolated failure of hygiene monitoring was brought to the school's attention. Income is considerable as the school has attracted valuable extra funds. It is well spent, and the school gives good value for money. Governors are very well informed about the school's performance and are closely involved in its work. Generally they fulfil their responsibilities well. However, they have not made sure that the curriculum meets all legal requirements or that the school holds a daily act of collective worship.

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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?	1	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	2	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

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your politeness, co-operation and assistance during our visit. We appreciated your comments and opinions. You told us how much your school has improved since Mr Sadler took charge. We think that your school gives you a good education and that the school leaders know how to make it even better. You are fortunate to have an exceptional headteacher and very committed staff who give you outstanding care, support and guidance. The school now has a really good atmosphere. You are offered a good range of learning pathways. You clearly enjoy coming to school and you are growing into confident and thoughtful young people. As you have become more committed to school, your teachers have been finding better ways to help you learn. Last year, your school's GCSE results improved sharply as a result of students and teachers working well together. We think you are making good progress because you are taught well and because you are given the help you need. When you joined the school in Year 7, the average Passmores student was about six months behind compared to the national average. Good teaching helps you catch up by Year 11. Last year, the overall GCSE results for Passmores were above average, but not in the two important subjects of mathematics and English. We found a few areas for the school to improve. We have asked your teachers to: - make sure that you can all read, write and use mathematics well - make more use of their assessments of your work to plan what to teach next - help you to think for yourselves more - help you to assess your own work so you can learn independently - help you think about who you are and why you are here by teaching more religious education - help you to understand more about other cultures. We wish you and the school staff well in the future.