



Costello Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116406
LEA Hampshire LEA
Inspection number 279818
Inspection dates 23 January 2006 to 24 January 2006
Reporting inspector David Bain AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Crossborough Hill
School category	Community		London Road
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Basingstoke RG21 4AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01256321263
Number on roll	981	Fax number	01256358629
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Royston Barker
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Julia Mortimore

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Costello is an increasingly popular, mixed comprehensive school. Most students are from white British backgrounds, with less than one in ten from minority ethnic groups. There are a few looked after children in each year. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below average. Students come from a wide catchment area, much of which is economically advantaged. The school gained technology college status in 2002. It has experienced turbulence in recent years, with considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers and a major fire destroying all mathematics and technology accommodation. However, over the last year, accommodation has been enhanced significantly and staffing has become more stable.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Costello Technology College is a satisfactory, but improving, school. This broadly agrees with the judgement of the school's leadership team, which has changed significantly in recent years. They are putting in place a range of initiatives to enhance the quality of provision and raise students' achievement. They have a clear vision, but are at an early stage of realising it in practice. Leadership and management at all levels is now clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and extending good practice. Governors effectively challenge and support the leadership team. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Their attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Costello is a caring school, but tracking of their academic progress is a recent initiative and yet to be used consistently. Where it is used well it is raising achievement. Students are given insufficient opportunities to contribute their views effectively and to take on responsibilities throughout the school. Links with other organisations are used well to support students' learning and to care for the most vulnerable. Whilst achievement, overall, is satisfactory and improving, standards are not as high as they should be. The high turnover of staff until recently meant students experienced some unsatisfactory teaching. Improved staffing has led to students now making sound progress. Standards are broadly average, but vary significantly between subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory, overall. Where it is good, as in humanities subjects, standards are above average. The most effective teachers adopt a range of strategies, to meet students' preferred learning styles. The school's self evaluation, which includes monitoring of teaching, is sound. The vast majority of parents and students are happy with the school and indicate that it is improving. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, as a consequence of having to address high staff turnover, accommodation issues and a budget deficit, much of the improvement is fairly recent. Through recent initiatives the school has demonstrated the capacity to improve further. Its specialist nature as a technology college is beginning to have an impact on the quality of provision, but was slowed by the impact of the major fire soon after new resources had been installed. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Continue to raise standards and achievement, particularly for average and higher attaining students and in English* Involve students more effectively in the development of the school, giving them more opportunities to take on responsibilities and to contribute their views* Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, making it more responsive to students' needs with a variety of challenging activities and marking which shows them clearly what to improve* Ensure greater consistency in the implementation of new initiatives and policies

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement, overall, has not been high enough in recent years, but is improving. It is now satisfactory. The school went through a period of high staff turnover, where it failed to recruit and retain teachers. Consequently, students received much unsatisfactory teaching. Although staffing has improved in the last two years, it came too late for last year's Year 11 students. Their progress accelerated but not sufficiently to compensate for earlier underachievement. Thus, average and higher attaining students did not attain the standards they should have. Consequently, the school missed all of its challenging targets in 2005. The school has made improvements, such as the emphasis now placed on developing the quality of students' learning and more rigorous tracking of their progress. Inspectors confirm that students are now making sound progress in their lessons. Students start Year 7 with standards which are above average. By the end of Year 9, they remain above average in mathematics and science. In 2005, English results were below average. This is because recruitment of appropriate staffing in English continued to be an issue until the start of this year. Students are now making sound progress in English lessons. Overall, in 2005, boys' achieved better than girls in Year 9 tests. At the end of Year 11, overall standards attained at GCSE were average in 2005. This is a significant improvement on the results of the last three years. There is considerable variation between subjects. Standards were broadly average in English language and mathematics, but below average in science. Results were particularly good in business studies, geography, history and religious studies as a result of the good teaching received in these subjects. Boys' achievement has been supported by the introduction of some vocational courses. This resulted in a narrowing of the gap between girls and boys attainment. However, it widened again in 2005. At all ages, the small number of students from ethnic minorities achieve in line with expectations, with most attaining above average results at GCSE. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well being are satisfactory. Most enjoy school, feel cared for and safe and attend satisfactorily. They like the friendly atmosphere and relationships between students are good. Behaviour is generally good. Students and parents report that it has improved since the introduction recently of a revised behaviour policy, which sets out clear expectations, but would value more opportunities to celebrate individual achievement. Students feel comfortable about approaching a member of staff when they have a concern, knowing they will be taken seriously and treated fairly. Bullying is rare. Students appreciate the 'prefect' system. However, overall, there are insufficient opportunities for students to take on responsibilities. Students are very articulate and have much to offer. Their views are sought through questionnaires but the School Council has not been effective in enabling the school to take account of student's views, influencing decisions by the leadership team. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their social skills and moral

awareness. Many take part in enrichment activities. They value the many sports clubs and arts events, such as the 'Rock Challenge'. Excellent use is made of displays around the school to celebrate these, and other, activities. They regularly show their concern for others through the significant amounts they raise for charities, and explore ethical issues in religious education. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the wider community, for example through their involvement in the Hampshire re-cycling project. Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school helps students develop a healthy lifestyle through encouraging their participation in a full range of sports activities and educating them in the importance of a balanced diet.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Recent initiatives to improve teaching and greater stability in staffing are having a positive effect on learning and achievement. Good quality training is being provided, sharing good practice in the use of a wider range of teacher strategies, including information and communication technology (ICT). Some good and outstanding practice is in evidence, as seen in history and religious studies, for example. However, it is not consistent across all subjects and has not yet had sufficient impact on raising overall standards. Some teachers do not take full account of the differing learning styles established in the 'Active Learning' course in Year 7. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that students know what they are expected to learn and planning takes account of varying needs. There is appropriate challenge so that students are well motivated. Students value the practical activities and discussion which occur in many of these lessons. Where teaching is less effective, lessons lack pace and challenge and poor motivation impedes progress. Across the curriculum, most relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers and teaching assistants are strongly aware of the needs of students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and of those who use English as an additional language. Provision, which was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, is now good. Work is routinely marked but students are not always told what to do to improve. Sound procedures have recently been introduced to assess students' progress. All subjects now use assessment data to set challenging targets and to identify underachievement. The quality of assessment is strongest in the humanities where students are increasingly expected to evaluate their own and others' work, which is increasing their understanding of how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has a broad curriculum which makes satisfactory provision for the differing needs of students. A positive innovation is the 'Active Learning' course in Year 7, making students more aware of different learning styles. In Year 9, students can opt

to do a second foreign language and the most able science students follow an accelerated course in biology, so that they can take the GCSE examination early. However, these arrangements impact adversely on arts provision in Year 9, which results in most not studying music and some not doing art or drama. In Years 10 and 11, students have a wide range of options at GCSE, including vocational courses in engineering and ICT. Those who wish to work for other vocational qualifications are able to follow these at the Basingstoke College of Technology. Students are encouraged to be active, but time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 is well below that recommended. There are good opportunities for work experience and for involvement in enterprise education. Provision for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Provision for the most able is less developed. Some of these students indicated that they receive insufficient challenge in some lessons and consequently underachieve. However, the more rigorous assessment procedures introduced in the last year should mean that their needs will be identified earlier. The curriculum is enriched by a number of visits to support learning and by a wide range of popular after-school clubs for sport, art and drama. The school's specialist nature has the greatest impact in the subjects in which technology is most immediately relevant. Design and technology and science for example, have benefited from the provision of new equipment. The impact, in the form of improved resources and teaching strategies to take advantage of these, has not yet been fully felt across all subjects. In part this is a consequence of a fire which destroyed the former technology building. There are a large number of computers, but students confirm that they are not yet used consistently across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall, the quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The school looks after its students well and there are good arrangements to ensure their safety. Students speak warmly of the support provided by the school and are confident in asking for help from adults they know. The school has effective policies for health and safety and all staff understand child protection procedures. The school is developing effective ways of helping students to improve the quality of their work. It has recently started to organise progress monitoring meetings, which take place twice a year. These involve tutors, students and parents. However, regular monitoring time between tutors and students is not yet consistently implemented. Students are, therefore, not always clear about how well they are doing against their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. The careers education and guidance curriculum supported by tutors is good. Students develop skills, which enable them to consider options for what they plan to do when they leave school. Those in need of extra guidance receive additional support. The school has made improvements in its support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. For example, in science it provides specialist help in reading for students with learning difficulties, which has significantly improved their results in Year 9 tests.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges leadership and management to be good. While evidence from the inspection confirms there are many good features, overall it is satisfactory. Since her appointment the headteacher has introduced several improvements in the school's organisation and procedures. After a period of declining standards and staffing instability, the school has begun to re-establish itself, is improving and is able to retain its staff. The senior leadership team provides a good blend of experience and areas of expertise. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall, but with some inconsistencies in quality. The school has improved its procedures for monitoring its performance, enabling it, for example, to share good practice in teaching. There is regular observation of lessons, with clear feedback to teachers. The findings are also referred to when identifying areas for staff training. These measures have given the school a generally accurate view of its performance, but, as yet, have not enabled it to fully eradicate the inconsistencies that exist in the quality of teaching, or to improve achievement sufficiently. The school seeks the views of parents and carers through questionnaires, although some parents expressed concern that it does not take full account of these. Governors play an effective role in supporting the school. They are well organised and have clearly identified individual responsibilities. They are very committed to the school, and challenge it when necessary.

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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?	3	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	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	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	3	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	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

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

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection and making us feel welcome. We really enjoyed talking to you.

* We judged that your school is satisfactory overall. We agreed with you that it is improving.* Most of you enjoy school, and behave well. We were impressed by your attitudes in discussions. * The headteacher and others with responsibility for making decisions have introduced a range of new initiatives to help make the school better. * Whilst many of you are achieving well, many of you could also do better in external examinations. The standards you achieve vary a lot between subjects. * We saw much good teaching and some outstanding lessons, but agree with you that some lessons could be made more interesting. Many of you particularly enjoy practical lessons and opportunities to hold discussions and use computers. * The vast majority of you and your parents are happy with the school and all it offers. You like the choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11 and the range of enrichment activities.* Becoming a technology college has improved your resources, although you indicated that technology is not used enough in some subjects.

We have asked the school to:* Continue to raise achievement and standards, making sure you achieve as well as you can in all subjects.* Give you more opportunities to take on responsibilities and to contribute your views, for example, through an active School Council.* Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, making it more responsive to your needs.* Ensure all its new ideas are implemented consistently so that you know what to expect and are not disappointed.