



The West Somerset Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123877
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281580
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Anne Looney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bircham Road
School category	Community		Minehead
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Somerset TA24 6AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01643 706061
Number on roll	1260	Fax number	01643 705700
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Martin Taylor
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mr Nick Swann

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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

West Somerset Community College is a larger than average upper school drawing learners from three middle schools. It has a resource base which supports the inclusion of 24 learners and an additional learning centre which supports learners with more complex behavioural and emotional needs. The catchment area is large and many learners come from areas where there is considerable rural deprivation. The number of learners eligible for free school means is below average and the number who speak English as an additional language is very low. The percentage of learners with learning difficulties is below average. The attainment on entry to the college is below average. The college has had specialist status in technology for four years and has one of the few farm units in the country.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Somerset Community College is a larger than average upper school drawing learners from three middle schools. It has a resource base which supports the inclusion of 24 learners and an additional learning centre which supports learners with more complex behavioural and emotional needs. The catchment area is large and many learners come from areas where there is considerable rural deprivation. The number of learners eligible for free school meals is below average and the number who speak English as an additional language is very low. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is recorded as below the national average, as is the number of students with statements of special educational needs (SEN). It is recognised, however, that the school's low figure for the number of students with SEN statements is a reflection of the way in which the Local Education Authority (LEA) issues statements. The attainment on entry to the college is below average. The college has had specialist status in technology for four years and has one of the few farm units in the country.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the college's judgement that the effectiveness of the sixth form is good. They also judge some aspects to be outstanding. Learners achieve well and standards in several subjects are outstanding. The sixth form is well led and learners are well guided towards academic success. They also develop good leadership skills and contribute well to the wider community. Teaching is good and some outstanding. Teaching is tailored well to the needs of these more mature learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all learners are informed about, and understand, the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to improve
- Support all middle managers in developing the capacity to fully implement the senior leadership vision

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

On entry to the college in Year 9, standards are below average. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 they are broadly in line with the average, indicating good achievement. In Key Stage 3 in 2005 in mathematics and science, achievement was in the top 10% of schools nationally, and achievement in English in Key Stage 4 was also particularly strong. Since the last inspection science, in particular, has improved considerably due to decisive action taken by the senior leadership to rectify problems identified at that time. Over the past three years, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have steadily improved. Achievement is good because of the quality of the teaching and the good attitudes to work on the part of the majority of the learners.

There are a few groups who make less good progress than their peers, for example some of the lower attaining boys. This is for a variety of reasons, and is despite very good efforts on the part of the college to provide the support they need. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, because their needs are clearly identified and because of the quality of support they receive. Challenging targets are set for all the learners, and they are well used both for the analysis of trends, and to identify learners targeted for effective additional support. Specialist status has had a positive impact on standards in technology, science and mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and in other subject areas. Learners in the sixth form also make good progress overall. In examinations there are outstanding results in several subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Learners' personal development and well-being are good. The college provides a wide range of opportunities, in and outside lessons, to extend and enrich students' experience as learners. Although still satisfactory, attendance has improved and that improved attendance, together with their own enthusiastic comments show that learners value these opportunities and make good use of them. Behaviour is good and relationships between teachers and learners and between learners themselves are friendly and cooperative. Learners feel safe in the college and know that support and professional advice are available to them if they need these. Learners' social and moral development is a strength of the college. Learners are aware of their responsibilities to the college community and know that their voices will be heard. They are keen to take part in activities which will benefit the wider community, raising money for charities and sharing some of their skills and performances with organisations outside the college. Cultural influences are strong in many curriculum areas and in the many valuable visits which the college arranges. GCSE learners were thrilled by a visit to a Stratford theatre performance during the week of the inspection and a splendid college production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* brought in large audiences over four evenings. Learners understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and make good use of the fitness and sporting facilities available to them at the college. Changes have been made to the lunch menus and learners understand how to make healthy choices, even if they do not always do so! All learners gain a thorough awareness of sexual health and the dangers of smoking and drugs through their enrichment programme. Learners obtain a clear understanding of the world of work through their work experience and through the programme of careers advice. In the sixth form, leadership skills are particularly well developed and many learners make an important impact on their local community, and the wider community through charitable and cultural undertakings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are good. Some teaching is outstanding. Teachers set clear objectives for lessons and plan for a variety of well sequenced activities which motivate and engage the learners. The pace is brisk and helps learners maintain their interest. Relationships in the classrooms are good. Teachers use questioning well to bring out what learners know and in the best lessons they model clearly what the learners should do. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and of the examination specifications. There is generally a good level of informal feedback. Whilst the great majority of learners enjoy their work, in a small number of lessons they do not participate as well as they might. In the best lessons, teachers make strenuous efforts to involve the learners fully and actively through a variety of activities. Those teachers have high expectations and ensure that the needs of all learners are well met. Learners identify these lessons as being the most effective in helping them learn. In some lessons, where the teacher talks too much rather than ensuring all are actively involved, learners do not concentrate as well and management of behaviour is less effective. In the sixth form, teaching is good, with many areas where it is outstanding. Learners appreciate the tutorial or seminar approach used in lessons and that their teachers treat them as adults.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good, with some very good features. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all learners. There are very good opportunities for appropriate work related and vocational courses for learners in all years. In Year 9 a specific group benefits from such a programme, while in Years 10 and 11 there are many individual courses from which learners of all levels of attainment can select a flexible personal programme. The college is aware of the need to broaden the Key Stage 4 curriculum further to better meet the needs of all learners and there are significant plans to widen the choice. The college's specialist technology status has made a positive impact on many areas of the curriculum, particularly through the provision of a range of computer technologies. The college also provides useful support to partner middle schools, particularly in mathematics and ICT. There is good provision for improving learners' literacy and basic skills. A strength of the curriculum is the provision of extra curricular activities, particularly in sport, outdoor activities and the arts. There are many sporting clubs and teams, with notable success at local and regional level. In the sixth form, in both the academic and vocational areas of the curriculum, learners are offered a good range of opportunities to help them develop a good capacity for their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Learners receive good care and guidance. All the staff is very committed to the well-being of the learners, making sure that the college environment is safe and that all steps are taken to prevent bullying and promote good behaviour. The college has developed extensive systems for tracking learners' progress and this is very much allied to their care. It has put valuable effort in developing in its learners an understanding of the importance of good attendance, study skills and positive attitudes. The college understands and analyses the achievement of learners well. However learners do not always fully understand exactly how well they are achieving in different subjects, nor how they might achieve better. Parents are regularly informed about their children's progress and express their support for the college. Vulnerable learners with more complicated educational needs are often subject to wide ranging support programmes to help them do well in college. Learners in the sixth form are well advised and supported with effective monitoring of progress deployed to good effect, ensuring that they know how to improve their work and make the correct choices of courses for further study.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The principal and his leadership team provide outstanding leadership, giving a clear direction for improvement. The principal makes the very best use of the expertise of his senior colleagues. The college is managed efficiently and effectively on a day to day basis. Good use is made of support staff to free teachers and managers to deal with significant issues. The college is supported and challenged by an effective governing body. Teachers share the vision of the senior leadership team but there are still improvements to be made in the way that middle managers put that vision into practice by ensuring consistently good teaching linked to good achievement. The systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching are outstanding. Managers have a comprehensive and accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and there are good support systems in place for teachers whose practice needs improving. The quality of improvement planning and self-review is high. The team reviews by which the senior leadership team monitors and evaluates the work of subject teams are rigorous and detailed and make very good use of self evaluation at middle manager level. Partnership with other schools is good. The college has been successful in its collaborative work with the feeder middle schools to improve attendance. The college has an inclusive approach to its learners. It works hard with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable learners are not excluded from their education in this remote part of the county. Whilst the quality of care provided is first rate, the systems for focusing on academic achievement have yet to pay dividends for all learners. The college has brought about very good improvement since the last inspection and shows outstanding capacity to improve. The college makes good use of its high level of resources. Leadership and management in the sixth form are good and there are very good links with outside agencies.

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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?	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

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	2	

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	3	
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

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	1	
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	2	
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

Dear Students I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your college. Thank you for making us welcome and for taking the time to talk to us. • We believe that the West Somerset Community College is a good school with a significant number of outstanding features. • The college helps you to make good progress by teaching you well and by providing you with a range of courses to suit everyone. • Your principal and the other teachers with responsibility lead the college very well. They are very clear about what the college does well and what it needs to do better and are making good plans to help it improve further. • Your teachers work hard to ensure that no students are excluded from their education and provide good support for those who need it. • You say that you are proud of your college and enjoy your work particularly when lessons have variety and involve you in doing and talking rather than just listening. You really appreciate the opportunities for sport, clubs and visits which the college provides. • We thought that your behaviour was good and heard from you how much you valued good relationships with teachers and your fellow students. • The college looks after you well and has good systems to ensure that you are safe. Your college needs to: • make sure that you know how well you are doing in all your subjects and that you know exactly what to do to improve • make sure that all teachers work together to make the principal's vision for the college a reality. With best wishes, Anne Looney HMI Lead Inspector Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE T 0207 421 6800 F 0207 421 6707 www.ofsted.gov.uk