



De Ferrers Specialist Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124442
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281726
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Michelle Parker HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	St Mary's Drive
School category	Community		Burton-on-Trent
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Staffordshire DE13 0LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01283 239936
Number on roll	1958	Fax number	01283 239950
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bob Frazer
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr Michael York

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	281726

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

De Ferrers is a large split-site comprehensive college catering for the full range of students aged 11 – 18. The college achieved Technology Specialist Status in September 2001. There are currently 1958 students on roll, including a sixth form of 245, and each entry since 1985 has been oversubscribed. Years 7 – 9 are taught on the Dove Campus and Years 10 – 13 on the Trent Campus. The college serves both a rural and urban catchment area on the outskirts of Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire.

Approximately 9% of students are entitled to free school meals. Nine per cent of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Pakistani origin. Only a very small proportion of these students need support with the English language. The Local Authority has provided statements of Special Educational Need for 39 students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

De Ferrers is a good college where students make good progress. This matches the college's view of itself. The college provides a good quality of care and guidance for its students, who respond well to the supportive ethos. The recently reconfigured senior management team is very effective and has a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for future development. Standards have continued to rise each year and the developments in the curriculum are aimed at raising these further. Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. However, at times insufficient attention is given to students' different ways of learning. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 is good and the college understands that this was not continued as well in 2005 in mathematics at Key Stage 4. Effective links have been made with a wide range of other organisations which promote students' well-being, for example, the work of the health advisers. Students enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good. The college has a good capacity to improve even further. The senior team has worked hard to improve resources and the college provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. It has its own distinctive ethos. Retention rates are high. This is because of the very good guidance students have when choosing their courses and the effective support they receive for their studies. Achievement is good overall by the time they leave at the end of Year 13. However, achievement in science is not as high as in other subjects. Students readily participate in community service, for example, through the Millennium Volunteers' Project, and have a strong commitment to the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. They also take an active part in the whole of college life through leading the college council and supporting younger students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure progress in mathematics in Key Stage 4 improves to match that in Key Stage 3 through improving teaching methods in line with National strategy principles.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 11, students are currently reaching above-average standards, and progress made since coming to the college is good. Thus whilst the college evaluated its performance as satisfactory, inspectors judge it to be good. The proportion of students gaining the equivalent of five or more A*- C grades has risen to 63%, influenced considerably by the successful introduction of Intermediate GNVQ courses in science and information and communication technology (ICT). The rigorous reviews of the work of faculties, ensuring parity on both college sites, extensive use of target

setting and ongoing use of assessment have also been major factors in bringing about this substantial improvement. However, in 2005, only 38% of pupils attained five or more GCSE grades in the range A*- C, including both English and mathematics. This is lower than expected and influenced the school in its judgement of satisfactory. In the majority of subjects, including English and design and technology (D&T), girls significantly outperformed boys, achieving consistently well and occasionally very well. The college is aware of this lower achievement of boys and is implementing strategies to close the gaps.

The minority of pupils with learning difficulties or for whom English is an additional language make consistently good progress in relation to their capabilities.

Students join Year 12 with ability levels that are broadly the norm for sixth forms. By the time they leave at the end of Year 13 they have made good progress. This confirms the college's judgement that achievement and standards in the sixth form are good, and inspectors agree. Students achieve particularly well in D&T, ICT, business education and sociology, but less well in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The college evaluates pupils' personal development and well-being as good, and inspectors agree.

Attendance is good. The majority of students enjoy college, have positive attitudes and behave well. They feel safe and are confident that support is available if needed. Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Help and advice are readily available from health advisers appointed by the college.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. In Key Stage 3 and 4 it is fostered well through assemblies, religious education and citizenship. Sixth form students benefit from the regular input of guest speakers and from their general studies course. There is provision for religious education through the general studies programme.

Year and whole-college councils give students, of all ages, the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the college community and to take responsibility. They have brought about changes such as the refurbishment of toilets and the provision of healthier drinks in vending machines. Sixth formers are encouraged to help younger students.

There are good links with the local community. A feature is the Senior Citizens' Christmas Party organised annually by Year 11 students.

Through their broad curricular experience, students develop good skills for their future economic well-being. They are provided with an extensive programme of careers guidance, good opportunities for work experience and detailed guidance for entry into higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the college's judgement that the quality of teaching is good overall and is particularly strong in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.

In lessons that were outstanding, teachers planned varied and well paced activities which engaged students and provided challenges that promoted higher-order thinking. In these lessons work was designed to meet individual needs and ensured that all students made very good progress.

The college has rightly focused on the use of assessment to improve learning and has produced detailed guidelines for use in the college. When these guidelines were followed, students were able to improve their work and reached higher standards. Best practice was seen in design and technology, where the teacher clearly explained what students needed to do in order to reach higher national curriculum targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The college offers a good curriculum that has improved since the last inspection. All the issues identified at that time have been addressed and the curriculum has been appropriately extended to give students the opportunity to study vocational courses in ICT and science at Key Stage 4. There is good access to careers guidance for students and there are wide ranging and extensive enrichment activities, which are popular with students. The college has rightly identified the need to improve the curriculum further so that students who would benefit from additional vocational courses at Key Stage 4 are better catered for. It is already piloting enterprise education as an extra-curricular activity to be introduced for all students at Key Stage 4 in 2006 and has exciting plans to introduce a new type of curriculum which provides pathways tailored for individual needs. In the sixth form, students have a good choice of academic and vocational courses and there is good collaboration with a local college to give students access to additional subjects not available in the college. Opportunities for students are broadened further by the provision of courses in leisure, general studies and community service.

The specialist status of the college in technology has had a positive impact, particularly in the areas of D&T and ICT. Standards are steadily rising in these subject areas and improved ICT facilities are used effectively in many subjects to support teaching and learning. The work of the college has also supported the progress of students in partner schools and has benefited the wider community. The college has leading edge practitioners who work on behalf of the specialist schools and Academies trust.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for the care, guidance and support for students is good. Although much of the provision is fairly new, some has already had a significant impact, for example, the mentoring for Year 11 students. This effective support for GCSE work last year enabled some students to attain higher grades than expected. A rich variety of initiatives supports students personally and emotionally. The college nurse is on site to give health advice, counsel students and support the work of teachers in classrooms. Systems within the college are clear, and students are confident in seeking help. Good working relationships with other agencies and effective arrangements for child protection ensure that the college effectively meets the needs of all students.

Strong links with carers and a range of agencies ensure that looked-after children are well cared for. Procedures for risk assessments and first aid are very thorough and ensure students' safety. The college sensitively manages the transfer of pupils from primary school, recognising that they have moved from a small school to a very big college. The split site creates difficulties but the very good induction procedures at each key stage enable students to move confidently through the college.

Good relationships and a clear structure of support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and the well targeted support for students who have English as an additional language enables all students to make good progress. Parents are fully involved in reviews and support.

Students' challenging targets are discussed with them and this is helping many to become clearer about what they should do to improve. The consultation days are well attended and effectively involve parents in supporting students' learning through discussion about their targets. Students find the careers and option advice helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the college are good. The clear vision of the principal is effectively shared with all managers and he encourages them to try out new ideas and develop their teaching. The new structure for middle managers ensures that all are accountable for improving standards and sharing good practice.

A rigorous quality assurance policy has been effectively implemented. This ensures that the college's view of its performance is accurate. Extensive and thorough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is conducted by the senior managers of the college. The accuracy of judgements that the senior managers make was effectively demonstrated in a joint lesson observation conducted by an inspector and a senior manager. The college's systems have allowed senior managers to clearly identify the next steps for improvement.

Action has effectively addressed the key points for improvement identified in the last inspection. Parents and students are regularly consulted and most say their views are listened to and acted upon. The college promotes equality of opportunities and tackles

discrimination effectively. Recruitment of staff continues to pose difficulties but the college has worked hard to ensure that appropriately well qualified staff are appointed. The principal strives to ensure that the accommodation and teaching resources are continually improved.

Much has been achieved in recent years but indoor physical education facilities are constraining the development of this subject. The college provides outstanding value for money. The senior managers have continued to demonstrate their capacity to improve, as shown by the steady rise in standards overall each year. Governors are effective in challenging the college leadership team and ensuring it is called to account.

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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	2	2
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	2	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	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

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	2	
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	1	
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

De Ferrers Specialist Technology College St Mary's Drive Burton-on-Trent DE13 0LL

3 November 2005

Dear Students

Thank you for the very polite and friendly welcome you gave to the team when we came to inspect your college. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. We were very interested in watching you work and speaking to your teachers about your progress.

We think you go to a good college where all the staff work hard to support you and help you to learn well.

We were impressed by how mature you were in your discussions with us and how smart your college uniform is. We were pleased to hear about the changes that your college council had instigated on your behalf, for example, encouraging you to drink more water. Your results in the national tests at age 14 are above average and your results in public examinations at age 16 are also good. The care, support and guidance offered to you by the college are good. The college is led extremely well by your principal, Mr York. He is helped a lot in this by other senior staff and all of the staff are trying hard to make the college an even better place for you to come to and learn.

Your teachers care for you and they work hard. You generally work hard in lessons, behave well and take care over your work. Teachers provide a great many opportunities for you to take part in activities outside of lessons and many of you enjoy participating in them. Most of you do well in tests and examinations, but this is not the case in all subjects. While we know that teachers do their best to help you to learn, we think that the improvements in mathematics at Key Stage 3 need to be continued into Key Stage 4 to ensure that you can do even better.

We wish you well for the future and hope you are successful in whatever you want to do.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools