



# Alcester High School Technology College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 125750  
**LEA** Warwickshire  
**Inspection number** 281993  
**Inspection dates** 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Clive Kempton HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Gerard Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Alcester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Warwickshire B49 6QQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01789 762285
<b>Number on roll</b>	826	<b>Fax number</b>	01789 400095
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Mike Dean
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 November 2002	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Annabelle Guyver

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281993
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and three Additional Inspectors in the first term of the new short notice inspections. A trainee inspector also accompanied the team as an observer.

## Description of the school

This secondary modern school serves the communities of Alcester and Bidford-on-Avon, including the surrounding villages and became a Specialist Technology College in 1998. A third of pupils come from the Alcester ward, which falls within the second highest deprivation quartile of Warwickshire wards. The school has grown in popularity. The small town of Alcester also contains a selective grammar school and a selective faith school. There are, as a consequence, fewer higher attaining pupils in the school. The school works closely with these neighbouring schools and supports a group of partner primary schools. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Alcester High School Technology College is a good school with high aspirations. Pupils achieve well and reach good standards by the time they leave the school. Overall, teaching is effective throughout the school and the staff have a collective resolve to make it even better. The school is very well led and managed and has a good capacity to improve further. The senior leadership team has a good grasp of the schools' strengths, and has identified the areas for improvement, such as ensuring a consistent approach to assessment procedures and the Key Stage 4 curriculum. It has proved that, since the last inspection in 2000, it can successfully implement change. Pupils' personal development is good and they are well cared for, guided and supported. The Technology College status has provided the school with a unique characteristic that has been a source of pride and a catalyst for raising standards. Inspectors agree with all the self-evaluation judgements that the school makes of its own standards and provision. The school provides very good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of performance data management systems to rapidly identify any pupils who may be falling behind, and track their progress as they move through the school.
- Share the best assessment practice in the school so that all pupils know how they can improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good and improving. The Technology College status has had a positive impact on raising standards in the specialist subjects and improving the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. The school has met its challenging targets. Attainment on entry to the school is very close to the national average. By the age of 14 pupils' standards in English and mathematics are above average and particularly so in science. Good results achieved in 2004 have been sustained in 2005. Girls' attainment is a little higher than boys. At age 16 pupils' GCSE performance, indicated by the number gaining five or more A\*-C grades, shows that standards are also above the national average. Girls outperform boys, although to a smaller degree than the national trend. The school inspires examination success in all its pupils since every member of Year 11 in 2005 gained at least one subject with a worthwhile examination grade and 67% of pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, the highest the school has ever achieved.

When compared with their peers in similar social contexts in England, these examination results represent good achievement. In their first three years in school, pupils make very rapid progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school is in the top rank in science for the progress that pupils make.

The process for target setting is rigorous and based on pupils' attainment on entry to the school. This generates challenging targets for which pupils aim in Year 9, and then later for GCSE subjects.

Pupils' progress is tracked within the subject departments. However, the systems used by the school to manage performance data are not yet sufficiently refined to identify rapidly any pupils who may be falling behind. All groups of pupils make progress including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. They like coming to school and attend well, with very few arriving late. They are well organised and settle quickly in lessons. Pupils apply themselves well in lessons and many choose to give up part of their break and lunchtime to engage in further study. The development of pupils' moral, social and cultural awareness is good and as a result very good relationships exist throughout the school. The vast majority of pupils are polite and behave very well. Pupils' spiritual development is adequate but they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and they adopt safe practices in lessons and around school. Whilst pupils are involved in the school and wider community, through the School Council and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, for example, their overall contribution is only satisfactory. Pupils develop workplace skills that contribute very well to their future economic well-being. Their skills in ICT and technology developed through the specialist school status are highly regarded by local employers.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Some is outstanding and none is inadequate. The school monitors lessons effectively in order to improve teaching and learning.

The very best lessons are characterised by stimulating and energetic teaching, often using ICT effectively. The teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils and they enjoy working hard. Teachers explain clearly to pupils what they will be doing and, importantly, why they are doing it. These lessons are very well planned and the variety of activities on offer is demanding.

Most teachers competently assess pupils' learning and progress. The written comments on their work and verbal feedback in lessons show pupils clearly how to improve future work. However, some teachers do not give specific guidance.

In the very few adequate lessons, some pupils do not learn as much as they could. Sometimes teachers do not ensure that all pupils are actively involved. In others the

planning does not recognise the need to develop pupils' understanding in bite-sized chunks.

In most lessons there is sufficient challenge for the able pupils. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support from their teachers and assistants.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Appropriately for a Specialist Technology College, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are expected to study a technology subject and ICT. This is reflected in the option choices most pupils have at the end of Year 9.

The curriculum for the pupils who take courses at local colleges is a strength of the school. About 60 pupils are involved. Most pupils are those for whom some work related courses are very appropriate. A few high ability pupils extend their skills by studying GCSE law, psychology and Japanese for business. Currently however, there are few opportunities in school for pupils to take vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.

The school makes very good use of ICT to support and enrich teaching and learning throughout the curriculum. The opportunities for pupils to learn work related skills are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their business skills.

The curriculum is enriched with a good range of residential and continental trips, which provide additional opportunities for pupils to extend their personal and academic development. There is a satisfactory range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, musical and sporting activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support given to pupils is good. Pupils themselves speak highly of this aspect and parents hold the school in very high regard.

Pupils feel very well cared for and, because relationships are so good, they know that they can seek help and support whenever they need it. The student services facility is a particular strength in caring for and supporting pupils. The regular use of tracking forms, and individual target setting interviews are an effective tool for support and guidance. Whilst these help maintain high standards in pupils' personal development, including their attitudes to learning, the school should use the data it collects to support identified pupils even earlier if they start to fall behind.

Staff recognise quickly any concerns regarding the well-being of pupils. Child protection arrangements are good. Currently, some pupils do not choose to eat sufficiently healthy food in the school canteen. Healthy options are available but are not well promoted or displayed. Action is being taken to address this.

The school has very good links with external agencies including social services and local colleges. This ensures a very good range of support is available to all pupils. These links are especially valuable in enabling pupils to have access to a range of alternative curriculum areas.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher leads the school very well and has successfully developed a new senior team who are committed to further improvement. Standards have risen under her leadership and the senior team have the capacity for further improvement. She has reorganised the subject managers and pastoral staff, who now meet more regularly and share good practice. This has stimulated the middle management team to share in the drive to raise standards and is providing good guidance for those inexperienced middle managers. Self-evaluation procedures are effective. Monitoring of teaching, for example, is shared by all managers. As a consequence, the quality of teaching has improved. Development planning is detailed, although the success criteria are not as sharply focused as they could be to help the school make even quicker progress.

The governors actively support the school and take their responsibility to write the annual report to parents seriously. They meet regularly and hold the school to account for the standards they achieve. They are aware that they do not fully meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

The management seeks the views of parents and pupils and acts on their responses well; for example, the change to school uniform and changes to the timings of the school day. Representatives from partner schools and the local community are very positive about the contacts they have with the school. A strong culture of sharing expertise works well for the benefit of staff and pupils in all the schools. The school fulfils its status as a specialist school for technology well. Teaching resources are deployed efficiently, and non-teaching staff are inducted and managed effectively. Since the last inspection, a new teaching block has been opened and there are good plans to further develop other inadequate accommodation.

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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	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	2	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

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

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

### The quality of provision

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

<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	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	1	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

<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 Pupils

My colleagues and I enjoyed visiting your school last week and would like to thank you for the time you spent talking to us and showing us your work. We thought you would like to know what we liked about your school and what we thought would make it even better.

- You and your parents think you go to a good school and we agree. • You were all very polite during the inspection and prepared to engage in conversation with us and share your views.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons was good. • Most of you work hard in your lessons, although your books could be neater. • You all looked very smart in your school uniform and were good ambassadors for the school. • Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and varied. • Mrs Guyver leads the school very well and her senior team are all committed to helping you to achieve even higher standards. • The Technology College status is giving you useful skills that you will find an advantage when you start your working career.

To make your school even better, we have asked Mrs Guyver and the staff to make sure:

- that those of you who may be falling behind are identified earlier so that you can be helped to make better progress more quickly
- that you all know what standard you are working at and what you need to do to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools