

# The Ash Technology College

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125272
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	285688
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ramesh Kapadia HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	715
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Interim executive
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Gladys Spedding board
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Krys Marshall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Stanwell Road Ashford TW15 3DU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01784 243824
<b>Fax number</b>	01784 240050

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	285688

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Ash Technology College is a small secondary school in the town of Ashford. This is an area of social deprivation in Surrey with a relatively high degree of mobility. Over four out of five of its students are white; about one in ten of its students speak English as an additional language and they come from various ethnic groups. About a quarter have learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), though few have statements.

The college achieved IIP (Investors in People) status in 2005; however, it was de-designated from its technology status last year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

The college, which has been subject to special measures since 2005, has had a legacy of under-achievement which has yet to be overcome. Its overall quality of education and care remains unsatisfactory, which is less positive than the college's own assessment.

Standards in the college are below average and achievement is inadequate. Progress in English and mathematics is satisfactory. However, provision for science and the progress students make in this subject are inadequate across the college. Overall progress during Key Stage 4 is also inadequate, as shown by the relatively low results at GCSE in terms of higher grades. Nevertheless, a high proportion of students attain 5 or more passes at GCSE.

The curriculum is inadequate because it is not planned sufficiently well to meet students' needs. Though there are strengths in English, teaching and learning are inadequate overall, partly related to difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff. These shortcomings lead to a level of attendance which is lower than at the previous inspection in 2005; exclusions are also high.

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory, as are personal development and well-being. There is good support for students with LDD whose progress is relatively faster than their peers. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also satisfactory and most students enjoy coming to the college.

Serious shortcomings were identified in the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed to the college in 2004, after a period of uncertainty in leadership. There have been improvements in the college's environment. Subject leaders have been appointed in religious education (RE) and music, which were areas of weakness in the inspection two years ago but the impact on students' achievement in these subjects has yet to be assessed. However, the initiatives taken to improve science have not always been well-judged and have not been sufficiently effective. Results in GCSE science went down in 2006 compared to the previous year.

Despite strenuous efforts, problems remain in the college. A budget surplus in 2004 has become a large deficit in 2007: the college offers inadequate value for money. Leadership and management are inadequate with weak self-evaluation, though there are some effective curriculum leaders such as in English and mathematics. The governing body has not proved equal to the underlying challenges and dissolved itself. An energetic and dynamic interim executive board (IEB) has only been operational for less than two months but is taking important steps to address major issues and offer the strategic leadership which has been lacking.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve science by recruiting specialist staff and offering an appropriate curriculum.
- Increase the progress students make during their time at the college, by improving teaching.
- Improve the leadership of the college by planning carefully structured actions which are evaluated against planned outcomes, within an agreed budget.
- Strengthen the curriculum by providing more vocational pathways to match students' needs and thereby support the concerted efforts to improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Attainment on entry was near the national average for the current students in Year 11, but it is below average for the current students in Year 7. Standards when students leave the college are below average. Whilst progress from Key Stage 2 to 3 has improved, progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 remains slow. Students' progress from Year 7 to Year 11 has been exceptionally low for the last three years, with limited internal evidence to show substantial improvement for the current cohort.

Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2006 show an improvement on 2005. Test results in English were high and above average in mathematics. Results in science, however, were low with 65% attaining Level 5 or above. The college's targets for Key Stage 3 were met, though these were low in science and have been set at a lower level for 2007 for a different cohort, in comparison to 2006.

The attainment of Year 11 students in GCSE examinations in 2006 improved from 2005 but remained below national averages: 38% of students attained at least five higher grades A\*-C, below the target of 43%. The percentage of students attaining at least five grades is above average. The performance of students with LDD is slightly better than their peers.

In 2006, GCSE results were satisfactory in mathematics and English where over half the students achieved a higher grade in at least one of the subjects. However, results in science were exceptionally low with only a fifth of students achieving a higher grade A\*-C. Results in some foundation subjects were also relatively low with regards to attainment of higher grades. The college's data for 2007 suggest that results in science will remain significantly lower than those in English and mathematics.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Student's personal development and well being are satisfactory. Most students like coming to the college. Relationships are satisfactory and students say that they can talk to staff if they have any personal concerns. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. However, a few students do not always obey rules and sometimes do not accept authority. Attendance remains a cause for concern, despite rigorous monitoring. The low rate of attendance is partly linked to the curriculum offered.

Behaviour during break and lunch times is sometimes boisterous but on the whole students get on with each other. Most teachers use the sanctions policy effectively to manage behaviour. The internal exclusion system helps teachers deal with disruptive students on a short term basis, but this can adversely affect their learning. Although the college reports a reduction in exclusions and in the average length of exclusion time, the number of exclusions is still high.

Students feel safe in the college. Some parents feel that 'there is a lot of bullying in older boys and girls to younger school members'. A recent survey indicates that bullying is at a similar level to last year; some students remarked that if and when any bullying occurs adults are there to support them.

Students are knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles and are able to make healthy choices when buying lunch in the canteen. They are well aware of the risks involved in the abuse of drugs. Their skills in literacy and numeracy prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. There is good learning in some areas as shown by the progress students make in mathematics and English. However, students' learning in science is poor, an area where a small number of parents expressed disquiet.

The lessons observed in the college range from outstanding to inadequate. The majority of lessons are well planned but in lessons where relationships are not satisfactory disruption by a few prevents others from making adequate progress. In the better lessons, there is a brisk pace and a variety of activities, based on teachers' sound subject knowledge. In inadequate lessons, the poor work ethic and lack of pace, compared very unfavourably with the passion and progress exhibited by students whilst discussing Hitler's final solution in an outstanding lesson.

The college has organised a number of training sessions and coaching for staff, some of whom are unqualified. There is a system of monitoring lessons, but it is not rigorous enough. As confirmed by this inspection and a recent monitoring of all teaching by the local authority (LA), the college's assessment of teaching is unduly generous.

Assessment data are not shared consistently with students to help them make progress. In some subjects, the marking of work is too variable, insufficiently regular and frequently does not contain comments which would help students to improve their work. The good practice seen in English would benefit all students if shared throughout the college.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate because it does not meet students' diverse needs and interests well enough, particularly in Years 10 and 11, as evident in the high rates of absence, detentions and exclusions. Options are largely restricted to academic qualifications, which do not sufficiently motivate a significant proportion of pupils. The college recognises that more vocational options would better meet students' needs, but has been slow to adapt the curriculum. Subjects with a vocational aspect, such as drama and technology produce some of the college's better GCSE results, indicating that students enjoy and learn in subjects with practical applications. A very small number of students follow an alternative curriculum and spend half a day a week at a local college.

The curriculum does meet statutory requirements. Provision for music and religious education has improved since the last inspection. A revised curriculum has been planned for September to take account of the falling roll, but there is no plan to increase vocational provision. Since the college has been unable to recruit science teachers, the majority of students now take single science, whilst those taking triple science are expected to complete the work in the same time as is devoted to the double award. Some departments are not fully supportive of the way that the timetable is organised at Key Stage 3.

During the inspection, an enterprise day effectively engaged students. Teachers organise a range of visits as well as study support sessions; there are reasonably well attended after-college clubs particularly in sports activities and productions.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The provision for students' care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall, with a range of procedures in place. The needs of students who have learning difficulties are identified early and intervention strategies to support their learning are effective so that they make satisfactory progress. The college makes good use of outside agencies to support and guide students. Those students who are at the early stages of acquiring English are reasonably well supported. Systems to monitor and track students' progress are in place but are not used consistently to guide students and therefore improve progress.

Parents, about a tenth of whom responded, raised a number of concerns in the pre-inspection questionnaires. Most are supportive of the college, but about a third of those who responded have concerns about their child's progress, the teaching, behaviour, and leadership in the college, as well as the extent to which the college is receptive to the views of children and their parents or carers.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

The headteacher, with good support from her leadership team, ensures that the college generally operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There have been some improvements in test and examination results but the college has not been swift enough in implementing changes that need to take place in order to improve students' progress to a satisfactory level. Monitoring and evaluation procedures have not led to actions to bring about sustained and rapid improvement in key areas.

Staff recruitment and retention have proved extremely difficult in recent years resulting in a number of long term vacancies. Managers have worked closely with staff and external consultants to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The college's strategic plan identifies some relevant actions; these are not always well structured or clearly focussed on outcomes for improving student underachievement. Financial planning for the longer term is weak. A recent report by the LA highlighted shortcomings and errors in financial information. Self evaluation and the capacity for improvement are inadequate.

The recently formed IEB has brought renewed vigour and rigour to the governance of the college. Its members are making diligent efforts to improve financial control and to implement a recovery plan. They have a clear strategic vision for the college but as yet, it is too early to assess the impact of their actions.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## 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>
--	-----------------------

### 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>	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Ash Technology College, Ashford, TW15 3DU

Thanks very much for your help during the inspection on 16 and 17th May. We enjoyed talking to you and being at Ash.

You will know that Ash Technology College has had problems in the past. It may not surprise you that we think these problems are continuing - you told us about some of your concerns while we were at the college, and some of your parents and carers also expressed some worries. You are concerned that teachers in the college have been changing too often, particularly in some subject areas and that you do not always learn as fast as you might. We agree with you and so we have asked other people to provide special help in order to make changes more quickly and provide you with a satisfactory standard of education.

As a whole there have been some improvements in the college. The environment has been improved and test results have improved in Year 9. You value the care and pastoral support you receive and you are learning to eat in a more healthy way. However, we still feel that you do not do sufficiently well at the end of Year 11 and that your learning could be better, especially in science. We also feel that you could make more efforts to attend regularly and work harder in lessons. We have asked the college to increase the range of subjects you can do which have a practical application, perhaps linked to the work you might do in the future.

Good luck in the future

R KapadiaHMI