



Oakwood Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106949
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287661
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Philip Jarrett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Moorgate Road
School category	Community		Rotherham
Age range of pupils	11–16		South Yorkshire S60 2UH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01709 512222
Number on roll (school)	1070	Fax number	01709 512244
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Gould
		Headteacher	Mrs J Charters
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	27–28 September 2006	287661

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: 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

Oakwood Technology College is an average size comprehensive school in Rotherham for learners aged 11 to 16. It was designated a technology college in 2001. The college serves a diverse community and around 20% of the students are of Pakistani heritage. Attainment on entry is broadly average, although literacy standards have declined slightly in recent years. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is average. The college also receives average numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There have been a number of significant changes to senior and middle management in the past two years, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and new heads of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) faculties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oakwood Technology College provides a satisfactory education for its students. A number of important areas of the college are better than that. However, the college has not managed to raise standards as much as it expected since the previous inspection and students aged 11 to 14 do not achieve highly enough. The college accepts this and a sign of its capacity to improve is that self-evaluation is robust, honest and fully focused on developing students' learning.

Standards are broadly average when students enter the college and remain so when they leave. This confirms satisfactory rates of progress overall. However, the situation is not quite as straightforward as that. Standards are below average at the age of 14 with results in English being particularly poor. Students make up ground over Key Stage 4 where the teaching is more effective and the new curriculum has succeeded in motivating them. The unvalidated GCSE results for 2006 indicate a significant rise in standards. In particular, English results were hugely improved, suggesting that recently introduced measures are already having an impact.

Students feel safe and well cared for in the college. Behaviour and relationships are good. Students enjoy learning, especially when the teaching requires them to make an active contribution and to think for themselves. This is not always the case. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The best lessons employ a range of strategies that engage students. The less effective lessons tend to have low expectations and slow pace; as a result, they sometimes fail to meet the learning needs of students.

The higher standards at Key Stage 4 this year are the result of some recent and significant changes. This reflects well on the leadership and management of the college at all levels. The new curriculum at Key Stage 4 offers students a range of different pathways in learning. It balances the traditional, academic curriculum with newer vocational and work-related elements. This has had a good impact on students' motivation. The college has also introduced an innovative approach to monitoring the progress of students within mixed age tutor groups. This has served to improve relationships and behaviour and has made a positive contribution to students' personal development. However, the academic monitoring programme has not yet been effective enough in helping students to understand how to improve their work across all subjects.

The impact of the specialist nature of the college is seen in good provision for ICT across subjects. This has a positive influence on students' motivation. Links with the community are well developed. The current challenge for the college is to ensure that standards at Key Stage 3 improve in line with the most recent GCSE results. The inspection team judges that the college has good capacity to improve. This reflects the more stable leadership team; new appointments to several key departments; a clear sense of direction within the college and a direct focus on learning. Above all, it reflects the impact already seen at Key Stage 4 in raising standards and improving motivation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at Key Stage 3, particularly in English.
- Improve the impact of teaching on learning by developing good pace, high expectation and strategies that engage students in lessons.
- Extend students' understanding of how to improve their work in subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students make satisfactory progress overall during their time in the college. Standards on entry are broadly average, although the college receives increasing numbers of students who struggle with literacy. Standards for students aged 11 to 14 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were below average in 2005 and the unvalidated results for 2006 are similar. Students' attainment in English is below that in mathematics and science. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 were average in 2005 and this was in line with previous years. Unvalidated results for 2006 appear to be significantly better and this suggests that recent measures taken by the college have had a positive impact. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress made by different groups within the college, although girls do much better than boys in the GCSE examinations. Overall, this means that achievement is satisfactory but, as the college acknowledges, with room for significant improvement at Key Stage 3, especially in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They develop a good moral sense through studying topical issues in lessons. They participate actively in the school and house councils and have a good range of opportunities to take responsibility, for example, through organising the annual fundraising event for Children in Need. The college canvasses and listens to the voice of students. Older students work effectively as mentors for younger ones. Spiritual development is promoted effectively through personal, social, health and citizenship education and subjects such as art, drama and music. There is a high level of student involvement in the college's extensive enrichment programme.

Students feel safe at college and are comfortable about raising issues of concern with staff. Behaviour is good and attendance levels are above average. Relationships are good and the students from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated. Students' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall but are good when the teaching is effective. Some teaching is not successful at developing students' creativity or engaging their interest.

The college takes effective measures to promote healthy lifestyles. There is very good provision of sporting activities and these have high participation rates. There is an

increasing uptake of healthy food options. Students make a good contribution to the community and are well prepared for life after school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A current priority is to develop a more effective range of teaching strategies which enhance learning, together with more rigorous assessment procedures. The impact of these changes is yet to be seen in the performance of students in Years 7 to 9.

Lessons in Years 10 and 11 generally have a clear focus. Students respond particularly well in lessons in which they are expected to participate actively. This leads to effective teaching that enhances the students' understanding and their enjoyment of learning. Levels of motivation are higher than in Years 7 to 9 and students develop a better understanding of what is expected of them. The best lessons involve students in assessing one another's work and provide opportunities for students to develop their critical faculties.

Teaching is less effective in Key Stage 3. Where lessons are merely satisfactory, weaknesses of teaching, such as low expectations and a pedestrian pace, result in many students not being sufficiently challenged or engaged. Teachers track the progress of all students effectively but this information is not used well enough to give students a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall, with particular strengths at Key Stage 4. The curriculum for older students has some innovative and flexible aspects with an extended range of courses providing well for both academic and vocational learning. New courses in areas like performing arts and media and an increasing range of work-place learning have added to the choices available to students. Careful consideration has been given to ensuring that such courses are well balanced alongside the continuing development of key skills. Good provision is made for ICT across subjects. This imaginative and forward looking curriculum for older students adds much to their enjoyment of college life.

In year 7 the linking of several subjects in a foundation programme works well. Students make a successful transition from primary to secondary education and good relationships are fostered. However, it presents problems for faculty leaders in monitoring progress within their individual subjects and the programme does not yet fully exploit the potential for making more productive links across subjects. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory but sometimes guidance for teachers lacks the necessary detail to ensure that work is well pitched to students' differing abilities. Intervention programmes are effective in meeting the needs of students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities and those with below average levels of attainment. The programme for students' personal development, including citizenship, is thorough and works well. This includes good career and future choice guidance for the oldest students. The college provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students feel safe and secure in college because of its effective arrangements. Child protection procedures are in place and staff have been appropriately trained. The college's arrangements help to promote good personal development by students.

Students receive good guidance in relation to their options in Year 9 and possible careers. Academic monitoring systems have recently been significantly strengthened. These arrangements enable the college to tackle any underperformance by students at an early stage. The system benefits all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The programme provides for frequent reviews of students' individual progress within the new, smaller, mixed age tutor groups. However, procedures are not yet fully in place to ensure that all learners receive specific guidance on what they need to do to raise their standards in subjects. As a result, students are not clear enough about how to improve their work across the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, as the college acknowledges. However, this is not the whole picture. The college has not been able to raise standards as much as they would have liked and younger students do not make enough progress. However, there are also some very positive features of leadership and management.

The college knows itself well. Its record of self-evaluation is detailed, robust and honest. It focuses forcefully on the need to raise standards and improve learning. It concedes that standards at Key Stage 3 should be higher. The leadership team has identified weaknesses clearly and introduced a number of recent, innovative features, such as the revised approach to academic monitoring, which are making a difference. Following a period of some instability involving senior and middle managers, there is now a clear direction to efforts to drive the college forward. Links with the community are good and the specialist nature of the college has enhanced ICT provision.

There have been improvements to middle leadership since the previous inspection. Clear procedures have been introduced to ensure that faculty leaders are given opportunities to monitor standards and quality. Progress is reviewed systematically through annual reviews of performance and regular meetings with a member of the leadership team. These procedures are relatively recent and have not yet had a significant impact on teaching and learning at Key Stage 3.

The governing body knows the college well and asks appropriately challenging questions about the college's performance. Although standards should be higher at Key Stage 3, the inspection team is confident that the college has a good capacity to improve. This is confirmed by the recent improvement to results at GCSE. This view is also supported by evidence of clear leadership in key departments including English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

My three colleagues and I very much enjoyed meeting you during the inspection this week.

Thank you for talking with us so honestly about the college and about the progress you are making.

We found that the college provides a satisfactory education. However, some areas of school life are better than that. Most students behave sensibly and are keen to do well. Relationships are good and this has been improved by the new mixed age tutor classes. You told us that you feel safe in college. Teachers look after you well and you are happy to talk to them if problems arise.

The progress made by students is satisfactory as they move through the college. The college accepts, however, that students should do better between the ages of 11 to 14. Most students make more progress at GCSE and they seem to be enjoying the new curriculum, especially the different courses available to them. Much of the teaching is good. You do especially well in lessons where teachers involve you in learning and make you think. In some lessons, students are given work that is too easy and, as a result, they lose interest.

The college's leadership know that standards need to be higher for some younger students. However, they have made some changes that have helped to make a difference. These include the new GCSE curriculum, the mixed age tutor groups and the different times for lunch and break. The inspection team is confident that the college knows how to make the necessary improvements. We have suggested that the college should do several things. We were pleased to see that the English results at GCSE were much better last year, however, standards should be higher for younger students. Some of the lessons need to make you work harder and to involve you more. Finally, many of you do not know how to improve your work in subjects and we have told the college that this is something they can improve.

Thank you for your help in the inspection and for welcoming us into your college. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you.