



Woodlands Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116465
Local Authority Southampton
Inspection number 290541
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Brenda Cusdin HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Minstead Avenue
School category	Community		Southampton
Age range of pupils	11–16		SO18 5FW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380463303
Number on roll (school)	776	Fax number	02380462342
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Martin Laux
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Martin
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	10–11 October 2006	290541

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Woodlands Community College serves a community where there is widespread disadvantage. Over half of the students have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is very high. The college manages an offsite facility for students with significant behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Currently, this centre caters for ten students mostly in Years 8 and 9. Students joining in Year 7 have standards that are much lower than in most other schools. More students than usual join the college other than at the normal times of year. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college moved into new buildings in 2003. Woodlands has specialist status in science and engineering.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the college are outstanding. The senior team looked hard at the particular circumstances of their students and their community, and devised creative ways to meet their needs. Their ideas are working. Year 11 students have achieved exceptionally well in the last few years and there have been tremendous improvements in students' personal development.

These successes show that there is an outstanding capacity to improve further. Inspection evidence confirms the college's judgement that its overall effectiveness is good with particular strengths in: personal development; the curriculum; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management.

The college is right to be proud of its outstanding curriculum. Staff want teaching programmes to meet students' needs, current interests and future plans. They have consulted students and their views have influenced what courses run at Key Stage 4. The good range of vocational and applied courses, and the college's specialist status in science and engineering, have made a huge impact on achievement in Year 11.

Achievement is good overall. The Year 11 results in 2005 showed that students, including those with some learning difficulties, made superb progress from their starting points in Year 7. The Year 9 students, including those with some learning difficulties, made satisfactory progress in English and mathematics and good progress in science.

The 2006 Year 9 results improved in mathematics and science but dropped substantially in English. Standards in literacy are very low. Standards at GCSE were very low in 2005. Overall pass rates at GCSE were better in the 2006 results.

Extra lesson time, an updated teaching scheme and an additional teaching programme have been put in place in response to the drop in Year 9 English results in 2006.

Teaching and learning are good. Learning is made interesting in many lessons. The vast majority of teachers ensured that students coped in their lessons despite their weak literacy skills.

Students' personal development is outstanding. Many lack confidence when they enter the college but their growth in confidence is striking. Students make excellent contributions to the college community. For example a small group of students run the 'bullybusters' scheme.

The college's links with parents and the community are excellent. Woodlands offers a range of additional services for both parents and students not found in many schools. Staff provide excellent care, guidance and support for their students. The support provided for students with severe behavioural, social and emotional difficulties is particularly impressive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is consistent teaching of literacy throughout the college and improve standards of English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' achievement is good in relation to their low starting points. Attainment on entry in Year 7 is well below national averages and students arrive with very low levels of literacy. Most students make satisfactory progress in mathematics and good progress in science by the end of Year 9. In English progress by the end of Year 9 was satisfactory in 2005, even though standards remained well below national expectations. In 2006 English results fell considerably lower than the college's predictions and the levels attained in the previous two years.

In 2005 the majority of Year 11 students made outstanding progress in their chosen subjects and courses. The exceptions were in English and for a small group of students with challenging behaviour and some with severe learning difficulties, whose progress was satisfactory. Standards in English remain very low by the end of Year 11. Standards at GCSE overall remained very low in 2005 but results showed a slight improvement in 2006. The strongest results recently have been in mathematics, science and applied vocational courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students have outstanding personal qualities. They clearly care about each others' well-being, as shown by the 'bullybusters' scheme. Even the youngest students feel very safe and say that they can talk to teachers or support staff about any difficulties. As a result, bullying is kept to a minimum. The parent of a boy who had been bullied in a previous school wrote, 'The improvement was phenomenal. From being generally depressed, our son is now a happy boy.'

Attendance is improving and is now good. Behaviour is good overall. In lessons, students listened very well and in many their behaviour was excellent. Typically students behaved responsibly around the site when they were not directly supervised. The number of students excluded from the college is still high but is falling each year. However, some students with severe behavioural, social and emotional difficulties display very challenging behaviour at times.

There are many ways that students make contributions and have a great impact. For example, those who have earned the junior sports leader award take out-of-hours sports activities for their schoolmates and help organise sports day at a local infant school. Students undertake responsibilities reliably and with pride in themselves. The clever ways that the college promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including a well organised programme of personal, social and health education, helps students to develop excellent personal skills.

Students are well aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Not all choose the healthy eating options in the canteen but many appreciate the recent improvement in provision of wholesome food at breakfast, morning break and lunchtime. Many take advantage of excellent opportunities for sport out-of-hours. Students develop useful

skills for their future economic well-being through a wide range of courses that emphasise work related learning. Boys said about a course on skills for working life, 'It makes learning much more exciting and enjoyable.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers think carefully about ways to make learning interesting for students. They explain ideas clearly and present them briskly using the interactive whiteboards. Teachers illustrate their points well, for example through lively demonstrations and draw on everyday experiences to get students to think things through themselves. They use a variety of learning approaches which help to hold the students' attention.

Some practice is outstanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers are very clear what they want to achieve and pitch this fairly high. Their presentation is stimulating and their questions move learning along purposefully. The teachers value the students' responses and push them to delve a bit deeper. As a result, students engage very well in learning and there is shared enjoyment.

Staff recognise that weak literacy skills can be a barrier to learning. When planning lessons, they think about ways to help students succeed; for example by providing prompts that help students organise their writing and by highlighting technical words. Although technical words were noted in plans they were not introduced well enough in a few lessons.

Teaching assistants support students effectively in lessons. Their presence in a classroom ensures that individuals with learning difficulties get the personal attention they need. Teaching assistants take the 'precision teaching' sessions which effectively help students acquire essential English skills in a lively way.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The college's curriculum is outstanding. It focuses very well on students' needs and is cleverly designed so that students want to study and want to succeed.

Key Stage 4 students really appreciate that staff consult them about their interests and future plans, and arrange courses that suit them. Apprenticeships, work related learning, and good links with industry and further education, all help students know that what they learn now is important for their future.

The specialist emphasis on science and engineering means very good technical resources and teaching expertise. Participation in national and regional competitions, and industry standard resources (for instance the sound and lighting systems in the theatre), raise individuals' self-esteem and pride in the college generally. Enterprise skills are promoted very well.

The college has a good rationale for planned developments in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Staff believe that a more joined-up experience will match the youngest students' needs even better. Science and design and technology departments are trying out this approach in Year 7 currently.

The college is taking appropriate steps to raise standards in English. There is additional teaching time this year for classes and for groups with specific needs. The English subject leader has reviewed schemes of work and planned thoughtfully how the extra period is used. Another worthwhile development is helping the current Year 7 students settle more speedily into learning in this very important subject. The English subject leader and the special educational needs coordinator designed very useful materials that highlight key skills in English. Good liaison with primary schools led to these materials being taught by Year 6 teachers and also in Year 7 at the college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The college successfully reaches out to parents and the local community. There are very many ways that the college helps students and their families, and works constructively with them to reduce any barriers to learning. The college's range of approaches is much wider than in many other schools; for example, on the site there is a sexual health clinic and a citizen's advice bureau provides a drop-in service. Courses organised for parents often link closely with the college's provision for more vulnerable students. A course in healthy family cooking led one parent to say that she could now prepare healthy food for her children. Child protection procedures are robust.

The number of students excluded for unacceptable behaviour has fallen significantly because of the college's success in providing alternative courses for students with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties at a nearby off-site centre. Excellent links with a wide range of support agencies enable the college to support them effectively and many return to main college classes for at least part of their timetable. Teaching assistants and other support staff provide valuable help to students with learning difficulties.

Arrangements for informing students about their targets and how well they are doing with their work each term are first-rate. A range of staff meet students to discuss their performance individually. The targets set for a few students with severe behavioural difficulties in their individual education plans are not precise enough about the learning they should achieve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The senior team carefully analysed the most significant barriers to learning that their students experience. They set up an extensive programme of support that is successfully reaching out to the community

and is removing barriers to learning for many. This complex provision is managed very well.

The headteacher has a passionate conviction that interesting lessons and courses play a key role in raising students' achievement. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is managed very well. Students find the courses interesting and see them as a pathway to their future employment or training. The headteacher's relentless emphasis that lessons should be interesting has had a clear impact.

The senior team's evaluation of the college's major needs has been effective. Successful improvements have been achieved because the senior team considered a wide range of relevant information, drew out clear messages and used this knowledge to plan a range of productive, and creative, strategies.

The senior team and subject leaders analyse test and examination results thoroughly. This skilled analysis identifies groups where performance is not as good as others and action is taken to improve the situation. The weaker performance in the recent English tests has led to appropriate strategies to improve teaching and planning in English. The college has useful systems for monitoring students' performance during each key stage. However, these systems did not prevent the drop in English standards in Year 9 in 2006.

The governors actively support the college. Each governor takes steps to get an insight into the college's achievements and challenges. Governors bring useful expertise and links from the world of work. The college makes very constructive links with other institutions and the community. The new accommodation is very attractive and adds to the welcoming, businesslike atmosphere in the college.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

We really enjoyed our visit to your college. Many thanks for our warm welcome. We learnt a lot from talking with you and the staff, and joining your lessons and activities.

You should be very proud of your Year 11 students. In 2005, the Year 11 results showed that they made brilliant progress from Year 7 and in 2006 they did it again. Those of you who were in Year 9 last summer did really well, although your English results could have been better. Your teachers have made changes already to improve teaching in English.

We saw that you enjoy lessons and that you behave extremely well. We were very impressed by the great ways you contribute to college life, for example by running the 'bullybusters' scheme. You respect each other and you are developing skills for adult life exceptionally well.

We were very impressed, too, by the way that your staff work closely together with you and your families so that you can learn better. Teachers make their lessons interesting. You told us that you like the practical and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and are really pleased that you can choose the courses that suit you. There are some new, interesting courses developing in Key Stage 3 as well. The students who attend the off-site centre get excellent support.

The headteacher, senior team and staff have worked very hard because they want the very best for you - and it's paying off. Your staff think that your college is good and some things about it are excellent - including you. We agree.

Very best wishes

Brenda Cusdin

Her Majesty's Inspector