



# Countesthorpe Community College

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 120268  
**Local Authority** Leicestershire  
**Inspection number** 291688  
**Inspection dates** 15–16 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** David Biltcliffe

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Winchester Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Countesthorpe
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–19		Leicester LE8 5PR
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2771555
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1100	<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2777027
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	311		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Peter Linnett
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Brian Myatt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 September 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
14–19	15–16 January 2007	291688

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The college is about the same size as the typical comprehensive school. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage; none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is in line with the national average. Students' academic attainment on entry to Year 10, a point that is less than two years before students take their GCSE examinations, is broadly average. The school has had the status of a Technology College since 2005. The principal has been in post since September 2003.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Countesthorpe provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students in Years 10 and 11, and a good standard in the sixth form. At GCSE level, it is slowly improving its academic work from the low point of 2004. Students' achievement in the most recent, 2006 GCSE examinations was satisfactory. Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved over the last three years. Most students and parents think that the college is doing a good job. This steady improvement in the college's work has come about predominantly as a result of the determined leadership of the principal and closer attention to key priorities. In the words of one parent, "New leadership is turning the college round." As senior management and governors recognise, however, further improvement in achievement, teaching quality and management impact is both necessary and possible.

Academic attainment is close to average. Students' standard of work is at least average when they join in Year 10, but they do not quite maintain the rate of progress they had in earlier years. As a consequence, the college's GCSE results, though rising slightly and representing a fair achievement for the majority of students, are a little lower than they should be. Achievement and teaching in technology, the college's specialism, are no better than satisfactory. In the sixth form, standards are average and most students make good progress, because teaching is a little stronger here than it is in Years 10 and 11.

Much teaching is good, resulting in a sound level of student achievement. In a minority of lessons, a slowish pace, occasional misbehaviour, some inadequate marking and insufficient depth in questions and discussion restrict what pupils achieve. The substantial minority of teaching that is just satisfactory needs lifting to a good standard and academic targets require raising, so that students can reach the good overall level of achievement of which they are capable.

Leadership and management, under the good leadership of the principal, are satisfactory overall. Senior managers are committed to lifting standards. Strengths lie in their success in improving students' behaviour, personal development, well-being and attitudes to learning. The curriculum has a good range of subjects and courses. There is further crucial work to do, however, in improving academic performance, teaching and management's use of data to pinpoint underachievement.

The college is a pleasant, safe place, with warm relationships between staff and students. Most attitudes and behaviour are good. Students generally follow a healthy lifestyle. Life-preparation skills and welfare are given appropriate emphasis and are of good quality. Students feel they are listened to. The vast majority enjoy college life.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

These aspects of the sixth form are good: the academic standards reached by students on most courses are broadly average. Standards on vocational courses are generally high: for example, all students passed in 2005 and nearly all did so in 2006. At GCE Advanced (A2) level, both the overall standard and the pass rate are average. In contrast, the overall standard is below average on Advanced Supplementary (AS) courses.

Students' achievement is good overall. It was in line with the national pattern for both A2 and AS courses in 2005 and was better than usually found on vocational courses. Achievement was higher in 2006. In the A2 examinations, for example, over half the students made good progress from their GCSE courses in the same subject and a further third made satisfactory progress. A minority, however, did not make enough progress, usually as a result of weaker teaching or inadequate effort.

In 2006, students did well in modern foreign languages, psychology (a quarter of all entries) and on most vocational courses. Achievement was weakest in the sciences. Good personal care and careers guidance are offered to students. The progress of individual sixth formers is carefully tracked. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but analysis of how well the sixth form as a whole performs academically is inadequate. Students take good advantage of the fair range of cultural, extra-curricular and work-related activities provided, so enlarging their experience satisfactorily. The sixth form provides a good environment in which to study and achieve independence, features much appreciated by the students themselves.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to a uniformly good level by ensuring that all lessons have sufficient pace, depth and challenge.
- Set higher targets for students' achievement and ensure that all marking is up to date.
- Evaluate the college's academic performance more thoroughly, in order to identify any underachievement more precisely.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in the school's specialism of technology.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Standards are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. The standard of the college's academic work is broadly similar to what it was at its last inspection. There are some encouraging signs of improvement, but standards and progress are not quite at the level they should be.

By the end of Year 11, GCSE standards are close to, though just a shade below, average. Results and achievement have fluctuated a little over the years, climbing in 2005 from

the dip of 2004, but falling back a little in 2006. Although students make less progress in Years 10 and 11 than they did previously in Years 7–9, achievement is satisfactory overall: the college's performance is at the midpoint of what all secondary schools in its local authority area achieved. Standards in technology are weaker than in many other subjects.

The school reached its modest GCSE targets in 2006. It has raised its sights a little for 2007 and 2008, but the targets remain insufficiently challenging and require raising. As noted earlier, sixth-form standards are average and achievement is good overall.

The encouraging improvement in GCSE performance in 2005 was not carried forward into 2006. Lifting the rate of progress to a good level therefore remains management's central task. This requires a further raising of teaching quality from satisfactory to good, thereby sustaining students' good rate of progress from previous schooling.

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

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students acquire a good capacity to understand, respect and work with others. They have a good appreciation of their own and others' cultures. Most attend regularly and punctually, enjoying college life. The vast majority behave well and have a positive approach to work, so making at least satisfactory progress. In a few cases, immature behaviour and poor attitudes to work, not always dealt with effectively by teachers, hinder the progress of all students in those lessons.

Students have thoughtful regard for the safety of others. Many make a conscious effort to be healthy by, for example, taking part in sports activities outside lessons. Although many choose to eat healthily at lunchtime, not all take full advantage of the healthy food available to them. Students' spiritual growth is satisfactory. Their moral, social and cultural development is good.

In their two councils, students take full advantage of the good opportunities they have to raise and discuss issues of interest or concern. Through their participation, council members learn to take responsibility, whilst making a significant contribution to their college community.

Students develop well the skills that will be of use to them in their working lives. In organising college events, for instance, they learn to work effectively in teams. They have good awareness of such financial issues as budgeting, saving and credit. The personal development of students in the sixth form is good, resulting in thoughtful, confident and mature young people.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Their quality explains why students achieve as they do. There is very little outstanding teaching, but a considerable amount is good, especially in the sixth form.

Students learn effectively in most lessons, because teachers know well the needs of both their classes and the individual students within them. In the best cases, this information is well used to provide a suitably wide range of activities that challenges all. As a result, learning is lively, well paced and engaging. A good example was in an English lesson where students enjoyed taking the role of a character from 'Blood Brothers' and then being interviewed by the rest of the class. Lessons are well prepared.

In contrast, where teaching is just satisfactory, students are often content to be passive, learning is slow and teachers provide work that is too easy. In a small minority of lessons, students' unsatisfactory behaviour hinders learning. The overall quality of teaching and learning requires raising in the school's specialism of technology.

Much marking informs students of the standards they have reached and how to improve. In contrast, a significant minority of work is only given a tick or cross and some exercise books remain unmarked for some time. The college has made good provision for students to work independently of their teachers, but students do not consistently demonstrate the confidence or ability to make full use of these resources. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are most able learn at the same rate as other students. Those with statements of special educational need are well supported.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The college provides a good curriculum for all students. It incorporates a significant vocational component at all stages. This feature enhances students' achievement, because they see direct relevance in what they study. It also encourages students to stay on in education after the age of 16.

The college works collaboratively with other educational institutions to ensure that local demands, such as those of the construction industry, are well met. There is, however, scope for more to be done, especially in the sixth form, to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and to enrich students' experiences through in-college contact with significant people from the outside world. A weakness is that the college does not provide a daily act of collective worship or teach religious education to all pupils.

Becoming a Technology College has resulted in a considerable increase in ICT resources and a start on providing access to learning materials over the Internet. Five design and technology courses are provided to GCSE level, but none in the sixth form. As a subject, however, technology is far from being a strength of the college.

Through good links with high schools, students benefit from 'bridging units' at the end of Year 9 that strengthen curricular continuity in English, mathematics, science, art and music. A good range of extra-curricular activities is enjoyed by students, including many who take advantage of extra transport provided by the college.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The caring, supportive environment for students is a strength of the college. Students' personal development is carefully monitored by tutors and year leaders. Staff know and support their students well. The support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and these students make satisfactory progress as a result. The college makes suitable, effective use of outside agencies to provide any expertise and support not available through the college's own staff, especially on aspects of health and safety education.

Students' academic progress is monitored satisfactorily. A good amount of data held on attainment and effort underpins a more rigorous oversight of progress than previously, so that students' progress can be monitored effectively. Guidance is good on subject choices for students entering the college, continuing into the sixth form or informing decisions about education and work beyond the sixth form.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory throughout the college. The college runs smoothly and resources are deployed adequately. Under the principal's clear vision and determined leadership, senior managers and other staff have secured significant improvements in behaviour and the tracking of students' progress. Heads of department are now more accountable for the standards students attain and for the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. Finances have been put on a secure footing. The climate for learning has improved.

The achievement of students by the end of Year 11 remains slightly less than it should be and is correctly identified by management as a priority for improvement. Underachievement largely occurs because the quality of learning in about half the lessons is no more than satisfactory and because there is insufficient, concerted focus on the means of quickly securing success: action plans tend not to be straight to the point but wordy and management monitoring lacks some data and thoroughness.



The college currently displays a satisfactory capacity to improve. This rating is less than the 'good' judgement of the college itself, largely because students' achievement remains less than it should be. Senior management, as a whole, now needs to reinforce the principal's lead and demonstrate its full corporate capacity to secure higher achievement through successfully raising teaching quality, middle management effectiveness, standards in technology and monitoring acumen.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the strengths of the college, have a hands-on approach and act as 'critical friends.' They do not, however, set high enough academic targets or have access to sufficient summative data by which to judge the college's achievements rigorously. The college has good links with many partner institutions. It has firm plans to enhance its links with parents. Its strong links with the community make it well placed to become an extended school. The college gives satisfactory value for money.



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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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>	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	3	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<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.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

As you know, inspectors recently visited your college to check on its progress. We should like to thank you all very much for your welcome and for what you told us.

Overall, we think that the college provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Standards are average. Progress, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form.

- There are several important features of the college that are good and of which you and your parents can be proud:
- The sixth form is the strongest part of the school: the academic achievement and teaching on the vast majority of sixth-form courses are good.
- You display thoughtful attitudes and behaviour, and usually learn in a calm, well disciplined atmosphere.
- Your attendance and punctuality are good.
- You take a wide range of courses that prepare you well for your future lives.
- You are treated maturely and offered good, sensitive support and advice.
- You appreciate all that staff do for you and are proud of your college.
- The college is steadily getting better, under your principal's determined leadership.
- There are also a few things that need to be better. Please do all you can to help your teachers to sort out these weaknesses:
- Some of you should reach higher standards, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- In some lessons, you are not expected to think hard enough or work fast enough.
- Not all marking is up to date or shows you how to improve.
- A few of you do not concentrate enough in class and disturb others.
- The college's overall performance is not checked thoroughly enough and its specialism, technology, is not a strong feature of college life.

Overall, you attend a sound school that is steadily improving. Most of your parents are very pleased by what it does for you. We wish you well in your future studies.