

# Hamilton Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120285
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicester City
<b>Inspection number</b>	291694
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Phillips HMI

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>	Secondary
<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	1000
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	K M Chimley
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Morris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 September 2002
<b>School address</b>	Keyham Lane West Leicester LE5 1RT
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2413371
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2431654

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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

Hamilton Community College is located on the east side of Leicester. Almost a third of its students are from minority ethnic groups and a high proportion of students do not have English as their first language. 30% of students have learning difficulties or disabilities, almost twice the national average. Many students are from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and 25% are eligible for free college meals. A significant number of students join the college at different stages in all year groups from across the city and from further afield.

The college has had specialist technology status since 2002 and also provides full extended college services to the local community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Hamilton Community College provides a satisfactory standard of education and care in challenging circumstances. Extensive development work and staff training have focused on teaching and learning over the last 18 months and students currently at the college are making satisfactory progress in their learning. Curriculum changes in Key Stage 4 have provided students with an increase in vocational options, which have been appreciated by students and which are helping them to make better progress. English is improving at a faster rate than mathematics, as a result of some intensive support with literacy skills that has been introduced. However, standards remain low in both core subjects and improving them is a key area for further development. Students' performance is monitored carefully and regularly, and parents are kept involved with how well their children are doing. Parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey expressed overwhelming support for the college. Students are set clear targets for their achievement, although they do not always know exactly what they need to do to make their grades better. Whilst a common approach to lesson planning ensures good course coverage, it also means that tasks set do not always challenge different ability groups within the class.

Students told us that they feel safe in college, and they feel secure in the knowledge that there are adults to whom they can take their problems. All safeguarding and security procedures are carefully attended to. A full range of support services is available to students throughout and beyond the college day, although students do not always make use of the opportunities available to them. Relationships between all members of the college community are harmonious, and diversity is celebrated. Students participate enthusiastically in sports activities, although they do not all respond as positively to other initiatives on healthy lifestyles. Visitors are made welcome, and inspectors enjoyed meeting many friendly students during their visit. The college has appropriate systems to monitor and follow up absences, but overall attendance figures are still inadequate. Poor attendance continues to prevent a small but important minority of students from doing as well as they could do in their examinations or from making full use of the support that the college offers. Parents and carers have an important part to play in helping the college to improve this, and it is a key issue for the whole community. Permanent exclusions are higher than average, but fixed-term exclusions have reduced and are below average, helped by effective arrangements for seclusion within the college community.

The principal gives clear leadership to the college. He has taken the staff with him as he has developed the curriculum and focused on behaviour and developing teaching and learning. He is supported well by his senior team. Among subject leaders, there is some particularly good and outstanding teaching practice that is playing an important role in college improvement.

The college's self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. There is satisfactory capacity for further improvement. A small proportion of colleges whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on raising standards in English and particularly in mathematics.
- Further raise the quality of teaching by ensuring that lessons have greater variety and target the specific needs of individual students, and that feedback from assessment is used consistently well to help students improve their work.

- Further reduce absence levels and improve punctuality, in partnership with parents, carers and students.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. Students who join the college at the start of Year 7 have standards that are well below average, particularly in literacy. During their time at the college, they are joined by a significant number of other students who have recently moved into the city or have moved from other schools and colleges. Although students' results in the 2006 tests and examinations were exceptionally below national figures, value-added measures showed that students made satisfactory progress overall, and 2005 and 2006 were the best two years in the college's history for students achieving five A\*–C grades. Minority ethnic students performed better than students with a White British heritage. Overall progress in mathematics was significantly below what it should have been in Key Stage 4, but was much better in Key Stage 3. GCSE subjects that performed best, reflecting the College's Specialist Status were; Graphics, Food Technology and Information Communication Technology (ICT). Other better-performing subjects were Art, Drama and Performing Arts. Some students are entered early for ICT qualifications and achieve their qualification in Year 10.

Most students currently at the college, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, are making satisfactory progress as shown by their work during lessons and by the college's rigorous tracking and monitoring of their performance. The college is setting increasingly challenging overall targets for GCSE and, whilst the 2006 target was not quite met, the college expects to meet the 2007 target. Nevertheless, standards could still be better in English and particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 4, so that students' future education and employment prospects are improved.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall.

Cultural and social issues are particularly well celebrated through art, drama and music, and this encourages students to get on well together. Students told us that there are very few incidents of racist behaviour, bullying is rare, and they say that both are dealt with swiftly and effectively if they do occur. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the college during the inspection was satisfactory. The majority of students behave well but occasionally lessons are interrupted by a small minority. There are still too many students absent from college each day, with both authorised and unauthorised absence rates above the national averages.

Students say they feel safe in college and that there is always someone to talk to if they need help. They work well in teams and with appropriate awareness of their own and others' safety in practical lessons such as science or physical education. They are given a good insight into how to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and enjoy keeping fit by taking part in the various sporting activities on offer. However, they do not all appreciate or choose the healthy food that is on offer at lunchtime.

Students make a satisfactory contribution to their college community through the college council and committees. There are many opportunities for students to gain understanding of the world of work including enterprise days for younger students and work experience

opportunities for older ones. Students use ICT confidently, but their basic literacy and numeracy skills are not as well developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good features. Very little teaching is inadequate. During the inspection, good or outstanding lessons were seen across the college and with students of all abilities. Students nearly always enjoy their lessons. Positive working relationships, based on mutual respect and trust between students and teachers, provide a sound foundation for effective learning. In the best lessons, a lively atmosphere encourages active and enthusiastic participation and helps students to learn quickly.

Students respond extremely well when teachers make skilful use of visual and practical resources that cater for individual learning styles. Common approaches are taken to lesson planning by all teachers. Whilst this helps to ensure that all lessons are suitably structured and cover the appropriate course requirements, it sometimes means that the pace and variety of teaching do not cater for the needs of a few students who then become distracted from their work.

Students told us that home learning is generally useful, although some told us that they would like more opportunities to develop this work. Students like it when teachers add helpful comments to their work, but the use of assessment to help individual students improve is not consistent enough across the college.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum provided for students is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, students are taught in bands based on prior attainment. Additional literacy support is given to about one third of the students, although at present this means that they miss out on some formal guidance lessons.

There are opportunities to take GCSE examinations in an increasing range of community languages, but only French is offered for all students in Key Stage 3 and this does not meet the needs of students who wish to study more than one modern foreign language. From Year 10 onwards the college provides a curriculum that enables students to undertake vocational courses, as well as a full range of GCSEs. There is provision for students whose home language is not English to study vocational ICT with specialised language support. Some students receive part of their education in a vocational college or through off-site training, whilst also receiving their statutory entitlement to English and mathematics at Hamilton. Adult literacy and numeracy courses are provided for students for whom this is appropriate. Examined courses in religious education and citizenship are provided for all students, ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The college holds the Artsmark Silver award in recognition of its arts provision. Specialist technology college status has made the use of and access to ICT widespread but the development and use of online learning materials and support are at an early stage.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support given to students are satisfactory with some good features. Health and safety arrangements are good, and all safeguarding procedures are secure and particularly well managed.

Students say they feel well cared for. This is especially apparent in the way that new students, many of whom do not speak English as their home language or have particular difficulties, are welcomed into the college. This quickly helps them to become integrated into the college community. The college works closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that the good support is given to students who have learning difficulties, those for whom English is an additional language, and those who for whatever reason are vulnerable. A parent whose son joined the college recently wrote to praise the way that 'staff make every effort to help students settle in as quickly and smoothly as possible'.

Systems for monitoring and assessment are used consistently across the college. Students are given clear targets for their examination and test results, but the college does not yet do enough to ensure that the outcomes of assessment and monitoring enable individuals to make good progress. The Connexions service and informal discussions with teaching staff help students to make informed choices about employment or further study.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Principal gives good direction to the College, and is supported well by his senior leadership team. He has developed middle managers into a committed team that shares his vision for and understanding of the college's further development. The emphasis of the past 18 months has been on teaching, learning and students' behaviour. The progress and behaviour of students currently at the college are satisfactory overall. There has been a clear focus on improving the overall examination results of the college in terms of percentage passes, but there has been less emphasis on raising standards in the core subjects, particularly in GCSE mathematics.

All teachers have appropriate targets to improve their own practice and these are regularly monitored. Teachers are deployed effectively in a structure that merges academic and pastoral work so that all aspects of students' development are carefully monitored and parents kept informed. The governing body is committed and has a sound understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. It has particular expertise in financial matters and is increasingly challenging the college leadership about improving standards. Day-to-day management of the college is effective and value for money is satisfactory.

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<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>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<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>	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
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

27 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Hamilton Community College, Leicester, LE5 1RT

I am writing to you to thank you all very much for the welcome that you gave us when we visited Hamilton recently. We enjoyed meeting you, and we were pleased to hear your views about the college. You told us that you particularly appreciate the support given to you by your teachers and the opportunities you have to use information and communication technology (ICT). You also told us that the college is a safe place to be, where people get on well with each other. We think that the college provides you with a satisfactory education overall and, to make things even better, Mr Morris and I have agreed that there are three things that the college should focus on. These are:

- Further improve the standard of your work, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that all lessons are planned to suit your individual learning needs better, and that your teachers tell you exactly what you need to do to improve your work.
- Further improve your attendance and punctuality. A few of you still take far too many days off from college, and this stops you getting the best from your education.

It is really important for you to know that these are not just tasks for your teachers. You have a really important part to play by making sure that you have excellent attendance, that you are prepared for lessons and that you join in with everything that is offered to you. Your parents and carers are important partners in your education, too. Their support for you and the college is vital and much appreciated.

It was good to meet you all. Good luck with your tests and examinations this summer and with all your future plans.

Yours faithfully

Mark Phillips Her Majesty's Inspector