



John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120648
Local Authority LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number 291813
Inspection dates 20–21 November 2006
Reporting inspector Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Other secondary	School address	Hanby Lane
School category	Foundation		Alford
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lincolnshire LN13 9BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01507 462443
Number on roll (school)	565	Fax number	01507 462013
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr G Willoughby
		Headteacher	Mr P Kitson
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	20–21 November 2006	291813

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College is a below average sized secondary school which operates in an area where there is a selective system of education. As a result, most higher attaining students attend the local grammar school. The college is oversubscribed and serves a very wide area with many students coming from small rural communities. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds, but with a few from minority ethnic families. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average as is the percentage of students with statements of special educational need. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is about average. A very small number of students are from Traveller families. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also very small. Specialist technology college status was gained in September 2003 and Foundation status in April 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This college judges its effectiveness as good and inspectors agree. Standards are rising and progress in Years 7 to 9 is outstanding. This is mainly because of the exceptional progress made in English and mathematics where standards are close to average by Year 9. The challenge for the college now is to ensure that the performance in science rises to match that seen in the other core subjects. A similar upward trend in performance is seen in Years 10 and 11, and although results in the GCSE examination are below average, achievement is good when standards on entry are taken into account. Central to the improvement seen in the college are the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher, well focused management by a strong leadership team and good support from governors. The key issues identified in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the college are exemplary. As a result the college knows where more work needs to be done to improve even further.

The college gives considerable attention to improving teaching and learning. Because of this there are many good lessons and examples of innovative practice. Specialist technology status has led to improved learning resources and the beneficial impact of the use of new technology can be seen in lessons across the whole college. In most lessons, students are managed well and teachers take full advantage of the students' positive attitudes and encourage them to take the initiative. In some lessons learning objectives are not clear enough and activities are not well matched to students' attainment levels. In these lessons students are too passive and some become inattentive. There is inconsistency in the marking of students' work. Much provides clear guidance on the standard of the work and how it can be improved but in some instances marking does not provide this guidance and expectations with regard to the care of exercise books and the presentation and completion of work are not high enough.

The curriculum promotes achievement well. One of the strengths of the curriculum is the flexible way in which the college attempts to meet the needs of those students for whom GCSE courses are not appropriate. The college is seeking to extend the number of vocational opportunities to provide for a wider range of students' interests. Staff share a desire to help students develop into confident, mature and caring individuals and the guidance and support given to students are excellent. Students' progress is carefully monitored so that underperformance can be tackled at an early stage. Students have many opportunities to demonstrate leadership and their self-confidence increases as they progress through the college. As one parent wrote, 'My child is making good academic progress but just as importantly he has grown in self-confidence and self-belief. I believe the college genuinely cares about individuals, valuing all of their talents and achievements'.

The college works exceptionally well with other schools, agencies and with the community to enrich students' education and ensure their well-being. As a result students' personal development is good. Students appreciate how to live healthily and they are well prepared for further study or employment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science at the end of Year 9 by ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better by ensuring that learning objectives are clear and students are actively involved in their learning in all lessons.
- Ensure that the marking of students' work provides them with clear guidance on how to improve and that expectations with regard to the care and presentation of exercise books are raised.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of students is good. They enter Year 7 with a wide range of starting points but, because there are significantly fewer students at the upper end of the attainment range than is found nationally, attainment on entry is well below average overall. Students make outstanding progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly in English and mathematics, and this is reflected in the rising trend in the Year 9 National Curriculum test results, which are now average overall. Progress is slower in science and these results remain below average. The progress made by most students in Years 10 and 11 is good and, although results in the GCSE examination are below average, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades has doubled over the last five years. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to G grades is average and very few students leave college without a qualification. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities, Traveller students and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students. The college sets and achieves challenging targets for students based on an accurate but aspirational analysis of their potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They learn in a very supportive and inclusive environment where they feel safe and valued as individuals. Because the college works hard to promote regular attendance and punctuality, attendance has improved and now matches the national average. Students are proud of the college and enjoy taking part in all the activities it has to offer. In most lessons behaviour is good and the great majority of students respond very positively to the college's high expectations of self-discipline. They have a proper regard for safety and a good awareness of risks to their personal health and well-being. Participation in physical activity and a clear knowledge of healthy foods enable students to develop a good sense of a healthy lifestyle. Students make an outstanding contribution to the community and the college council is very active in its work to improve the environment. They take full advantage of opportunities such as these and make excellent gains in their skills that are the basis of responsible citizenship.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The college has developed a consistent approach to planning and structuring lessons and this approach, together with the effective use of electronic whiteboards, is having a positive impact on the quality of lessons. In most lessons teachers carefully explain exactly what they want students to learn.

Relationships are very good and students appreciate the access to staff and the many opportunities given to them to review and improve their work. In the most effective lessons, teachers take every opportunity to ensure that students are actively involved and encouraged to share ideas. But some lessons lack focus because learning objectives are not clear enough in terms of what students are expected to know, understand and be able to do. In a few lessons, inappropriate behaviour can occur because activities do not fully engage students' interest. Support provided by teaching assistants is very good.

The college has effective procedures for assessing students' attainment and this information is used well to track students' progress. However, there is too much variation in the quality of teachers' marking. In many instances marking does not provide clear guidance on the standard of the work and what students must do to improve, and not enough attention is given to the care of exercise books and the presentation and completion of work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The college provides a good curriculum which meets the needs and aspirations of students, including those for whom a full programme of GCSE courses is not appropriate. The college places appropriate emphasis on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills, and these are reinforced well across the curriculum.

Students in Years 10 and 11 are offered a good range of GCSE courses as well as some vocational courses. Provision has been enhanced by the college's specialist status and there are plans to continue the move towards a student-centred curriculum by extending the range of vocational courses. Students benefit from an extensive careers programme and excellent links with local businesses and training providers. The impact of this is seen in the increasing number of students who are continuing into further education when they leave the college. A well planned citizenship course, which includes sex and drugs education, helps to prepare students as socially aware and responsible young adults. Provision for students with learning difficulties is very good as is provision for gifted and talented students. The college provides an extensive range of activities outside lessons, including many clubs and sporting activities. These, together with residential visits and visits to other places of interest, contribute well to students' increasing levels of independence and responsibility.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Child protection and health and safety procedures are well established and discussions with students revealed no worries about their personal safety. Many expressed their appreciation of the readiness of teachers to listen to their concerns. There is a strong emphasis on raising aspirations and nurturing and developing students' self-confidence so that they can reach their full potential. Parents recognise the success of the college in this respect, as one parent commented, 'The college and teachers deserve an A* for the support they have given my child'. Students' academic progress and behaviour are monitored closely and parents and carers are well informed on their children's progress through regular reports and review meetings. Excellent support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities helps them to do their very best. At the same time gifted and talented students are provided with additional challenges. Students are guided to courses which best suit their abilities and aptitudes and there is a comprehensive programme for careers advice. This helps students to move on to further study or employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

College leadership and management are good. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has guided the college very effectively through a period of significant improvement. He has provided a very clear direction, high expectations and an unshakeable determination to raise standards. He is well supported by his deputies and others with leadership responsibilities. Comprehensive departmental reviews, together with high quality evaluation procedures, provide an accurate view of the college's effectiveness. These enable attention to be sharply focused on areas where improvement is needed and have underpinned the improvement in the college's performance. For example, prompt management action led to a sharp increase in GCSE examination performance in 2006 and action is being taken to improve the consistency of middle management. Staff contribute well to college improvement because they receive clear guidance on their roles and precise feedback on their performance. Effective use is made of assessment information to track the progress of students against their targets and to guide curriculum planning. This, together with a strong commitment to professional development, is having a significant impact on standards.

Governance is good. Governors play a strategic role in guiding and supporting the college's work and provide challenge for further improvement. Financial management is good and resources are managed well although several classrooms are too small for the size of the teaching groups and this restricts learning activities. Links with local schools, colleges, businesses and the community are excellent and strengthened through the college's specialist activities. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the standards achieved and progress made by students. The college gives good value for money and has good potential for further improvement.

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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	2
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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	1
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?	2
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?	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?	2
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

22 November 2006

Dear Students

John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College, Hanby Lane, Alford, Lincolnshire, LN13 9BL

As you know, your college was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your cooperation during our visit. We greatly appreciated your comments and opinions and were very impressed with your enthusiasm and pride in the college.

The inspection found that your college has many strengths. You are encouraged to learn and aim for high targets. Because of this you are making good progress and the results of the tests you take in Year 9 and the examinations in Year 11 are steadily rising. The vast majority of you behave well in lessons and this is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on helping you to learn. There is a really friendly and positive atmosphere in the college and relationships between yourselves and the staff are very good. Teachers look at your progress carefully and give you excellent support when it is needed. Because your teachers know you well they are able to give you very good advice when you have to make choices about the courses that are best suited to what you want to do when you leave college. You make excellent contributions to the school community through activities such as your college council.

We agree with you and your families' view that the college owes a lot to the leadership of your headteacher, Mr Kitson and we know how much he wants you to aim high for the future. We know everyone wants to do better and we have suggested a few things that we think will help. We have asked the college to improve the test results in science at the end of Year 9, to share the best teaching ideas so that all lessons are lively and interesting, and to ensure that your books are marked thoroughly so that you can make the best possible progress. We think you can help yourselves to improve by making sure that your exercise books are not defaced and that all of your work is completed and well presented.

One of you said that your college is 'improving all the time' and we know that you will want to contribute to this. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr K C Thomas Lead inspector