

Queen Eleanor Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120657
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291817
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	472
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Soraya Smithson
Headteacher	Mr Neil Oxborrow
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001
School address	Green Lane Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 1HE
Telephone number	01780 751011
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Queen Eleanor Technology College is smaller than average and serves an area where the most able students receive scholarships to attend the Stamford Endowed Schools.

Relatively few students are from ethnic minority groups or do not have English as their first language. However there is an increasing number of Eastern European families in the area. The percentage of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average.

The school has specialist school status in technology and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is rapidly gaining popularity in the local community. The new headteacher has quickly gained the respect of pupils, staff and parents. Effective systems to monitor the work of the school have been put into place and these have been instrumental in raising standards. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has tackled areas for improvement with great success. The vast majority of parents responded positively to the questionnaire and students are rightly proud of their school.

Achievement is good. The standards which students have achieved when they enter the school are below average. Results in GCSE examinations have improved much faster than nationally and current analysis done by the school shows that they are now at least in line with or above expectations so progress is good. As a result of the inclusive ethos in the school 97% of students achieved five or more A*-G grades at GCSE in 2006 and currently this is on target to rise to 100%. The achievement of the most able is rising in a similar way.

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of students well. There is a wide range of subjects to choose from, supplemented by a good choice of additional activities especially in sport. The school's specialist status has made it possible to create very good provision for the specialist subject of technology and for information and communication technology (ICT). Every effort is made to ensure that each student has the opportunity to follow courses which match their individual needs. For example, provision has been made for those who have English as an additional language to gain a GCSE qualification in their native tongue, whilst those for whom academic courses would be less suitable can follow vocational options. Many initiatives such as enterprise activities give the students opportunities to develop skills which will help them in their working lives.

The school provides a good level of care and guidance which results in good personal development. Students are polite and confident. They contribute well to the development of the school through the school council. They adopt a healthy lifestyle and the school has been awarded the Healthy Schools Gold Standard. They show their enjoyment of school by their regular attendance. Although a small minority of parents expressed concerns about poor behaviour, the inspection found no evidence of this and exclusions are low. The behaviour improvement programme which the school has introduced has been acknowledged as an example of best practice. Academic guidance is improving although the marking of students' work does not always tell them how to improve. Students support each other and feel safe. Those students who need individual support are very well cared for and make good progress. One parent commented: 'We have had excellent support enabling my daughter to finally be able to enjoy school and reach her full potential'.

The overall quality of teaching is good, although some teachers do not yet capitalise on the positive attitudes and good personal development of the students by giving them opportunities for independent learning. The students told us that teachers make lessons fun and engagement in lessons observed during the inspection was generally high. Many teachers use assessment information effectively to plan their lessons, but in some the plans do not identify in sufficient detail how different learning needs will be met.

Leadership and management are good overall. The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher. His vision and determination have produced changes which are starting to make the school the first choice for parents. One of them described it as: 'a leap in the right direction'.

He is well supported by his senior team. The middle leaders are developing well as a result of appropriate training opportunities. The governors provide very strong support and consistent challenge. Recent improvements show that the school is very well placed to continue its development and it provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers feed back through their marking of students' work how it can be improved.
- Improve the quality of lesson planning so that all levels of ability are challenged.
- Provide opportunities in lessons for students to develop independent learning skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards have been below average, but as a result of the recent rapid improvement standards are now broadly average. This represents good progress from students' below average starting points. The standards reached in National Curriculum tests in 2006 remained below the national average and progress was satisfactory. Current analysis done by the school, and observations made during the inspection show the gap has closed. Progress increases in Years 10 and 11. The progress made by students from Year 7 to the end of Year 11 showed the school to be in the bottom 15% of schools in 2004. The school moved to being in the top 50% in 2006 and is continuing to improve. The number of students gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A* to C increased by 14% from 2004 to 2006 and is on track to be a further 10% better this year. The achievement of students with learning difficulties is above average and boys make better progress than girls. The school is meeting challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good and they take pride in the school's improvement. They value the way that their views are respected and confirm that any problems are taken seriously and swiftly tackled. Attendance is above the national average. Students enjoy coming to school because of its inclusive atmosphere and strong relationships. They are aware of their targets and how to improve their work. Vulnerable students achieve well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and its impact is seen in high levels of maturity. They are responsible and help the local community. They contribute within the school by being mentors for younger students or through the school council, which has brought about a number of changes. Students take advantage of the good provision for adopting healthy lifestyles. For example, many take part in the extensive range of physical activities available to them and choose healthy eating options provided in the school canteen. Their economic well-being is developed well through the impressive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. During the inspection two thirds of the lessons observed were good or better and none were unsatisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and good use is made of digital technology. Many teachers make the objectives of the lesson clear,

delivery is stimulating and students of different abilities are challenged equally well. In some lessons this is not the case and teachers fail to offer suitable challenge and to provide opportunities for students to work independently. There are good relationships and students progress well as a result of their positive attitudes. The learning support department effectively helps those students with physical, emotional and behavioural difficulties to overcome barriers to their learning. As a result, these students progress well. Students' behaviour in lessons is generally good with minor disruptions managed effectively.

The marking of students' work is variable and more comments are needed which show students how to improve their work. Parents are regularly informed about their children's progress and when work needs to be completed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Technology college status has enabled the curriculum to be enhanced in mathematics, science and technology. The use of ICT across the curriculum has increased, with significant benefits to students. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum provides a good basis for progress. In Years 10 and 11 students choose from a wide range of subjects, including some in vocational areas. Some students take GCSE and equivalent examinations early. The provision of a modified curriculum for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is good and prepares them effectively for future employment. The comprehensive PHSE course is very good and taught by specialist teachers.

Students are provided with a good range of extra-curricular activities. They very much enjoy taking part in sports and drama productions. There are also many educational trips and visits. Activities which involve team building, enterprise and financial skills develop students' self-confidence well. The school uses its many good links with other schools and organisations to improve transition and increase the range of vocational courses offered.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its students. There are good arrangements for transition from primary school. All students have target grades which are shared with parents through six progress reports each year. Students' progress against these targets is monitored well and those likely to underachieve are identified and supported by progress managers or subject intervention programmes. Though assessment data is well managed, the consequent academic guidance which will bring about improvements in individual students' work is not yet fully in place. The student support centre is a purpose-built facility which offers a variety of support opportunities for a wide range of students. Centre staff have good links with external agencies and an innovative, inclusive approach. Guidance on careers and further study is good and the school works effectively with external advisers to help students choose appropriate courses. Teaching assistants are well-deployed. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are in place, and all other statutory requirements are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team analyses the school's performance perceptively, has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses, and has set appropriate priorities for its future development. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding, and is strongly endorsed by governors and colleagues. He gives clear strategic direction to the school, and is ably supported by his senior team.

The school monitors its performance rigorously and all levels of leadership are involved in self-evaluation. Extensive training has been provided for middle managers some of whom are relatively inexperienced. The professional development of all staff is effectively managed and the school makes good use of its links with a wide range of partner organisations to provide development opportunities.

Governance is good. Governors know the school very well. They bring a wide range of experience and skills to their role, which enables them to challenge and support the school effectively.

Financial management is very good and the school has gained the Financial Management in Schools standard.

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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>	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?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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	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?	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?	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.

Annex A

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	2
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

4 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Eleanor Technology College, Stamford, PE9 1HE.

On behalf of myself and my two colleagues I want to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school and how good it was to meet such a friendly, polite and happy group of young people. You helped us greatly in our work and I am writing to tell you about our findings.

We found that the school is good with many strong features. These include:

- the progress you are all now making in your work
- the way you behave and the consideration you show for each other
- the way the headteacher and his team have led the school and brought about impressive improvements in a very short time
- the good range of subjects you can study and the good facilities the school has to help you improve the quality of your work through being a specialist technology college
- the good teaching which is improving even more because of the way the school monitors its work and your progress
- the support the school gives to those of you who need it in order to progress as well as possible.

You told us how much you enjoy coming to school and how you appreciate the many extra opportunities the school offers you in sport and other clubs. You make good contributions to charity events and by helping in the local community and you contribute to the life of the school through the school council. You said you feel safe and you are confident that adults in the school will help if you have problems.

We think there are a few things the school could do to make your progress even better. We have asked that the following development points should be addressed.

- Teachers need to be sure to always let you know how to improve your work by writing helpful comments and suggestions when they mark it.
- All lessons need to be planned to give every student opportunities to be suitably challenged.
- There should be opportunities in lessons for you develop the skills needed to become independent learners.

You are right to be proud of your school and the way it is helping you to become successful adults. You can help by continuing to attend regularly and by asking your teachers to show you how to improve your work. We wish you all the best for your futures.

Elaine Taylor HMI