



Kingsthorpe Community College - Specialist Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122079
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292312
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Melanie Kavanagh HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Boughton Green Road
School category	Community		Kingsthorpe
Age range of pupils	11–18		Northampton NN2 7HR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01604 716106
Number on roll (school)	1413	Fax number	01604 720824
Number on roll (6th form)	200		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	David Fonville
		Headteacher	Judith Long
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002		

Age group 11–18	Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007	Inspection number 292312
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Kingsthorpe Community College was created in September 2004 by the amalgamation of existing middle and upper schools. It is larger than many secondary schools. It gained specialist sports status, with history as the subsidiary subject, in July 2006. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is higher than the national average. The college has above average numbers of students learning English as an additional language and approximately 24% of students are from a minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is below average. The college operates from two sites approximately a mile and a half apart. A new, purpose built college that will house the whole student population is due to open in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The college is providing a satisfactory standard of education. Standards and progress at Key Stage 3 are at least satisfactory and have improved to satisfactory at Key Stage 4, having previously been inadequate in previous years. The sixth form provides satisfactory education, although standards are higher at GCE Advanced level than at Advanced Subsidiary level. The college works well in partnership with other agencies, particularly in promoting a flexible curriculum and securing good transition arrangements for vulnerable students from primary schools. The capacity to improve is satisfactory as demonstrated by improvements in behaviour, attendance, staffing and teaching. The curriculum provided is a particular strength with wide and appropriate choices encompassing academic and vocational courses.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but the college has not yet secured consistently good teaching across or within subjects. Students make good progress and achieve high grades in some subjects, including English and history, but achieve less well in other subjects where teachers' demands and aspirations are not high enough. Assessment is well established with appropriate targets set for students. Feedback to students in lessons and on their written work is of variable quality and does not always provide sufficient information to students on how to improve their work. Students feel safe at the college and they have adopted an increasingly healthy lifestyle owing to improved opportunities for healthy eating and sporting activities. Significant improvements have been made to behaviour and attendance which are now satisfactory. Bullying, and the very few racist incidents, are dealt with swiftly and decisively. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire supported the college and a few expressed great praise for the way the college has supported and cared for students. However, a minority expressed continuing concerns over behaviour.

Support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is good. Students with behavioural difficulties are well served through the inclusion unit and exclusions have been reduced significantly.

Although the college's performance is generally satisfactory, achievement at Key Stage 4 in 2006 was inadequate. Before its next Section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the college to monitor the progress it has made in remedying this weakness. The college will receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form offers a satisfactory standard of education. Results have been below average in GCE Advanced Subsidiary examinations but they are much closer to average at GCE Advanced level. There are variations between subjects but overall achievement is satisfactory. Students on the developing range of vocational courses make good progress and many of them progress to further courses in their chosen work-related areas. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are strengths in some subjects, including English and history, where teachers have high expectations and encourage

the students to participate well in their lessons. Occasionally, teachers place insufficient emphasis on discussion and independent learning and students are too passive. Personal development is satisfactory. Students are very positive about their sixth form experience. However, some lack confidence and are over-dependent on teachers. Students value highly the support they receive. The sixth form curriculum is good, with an increasing range of academic and vocational courses. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership has a clear focus on evaluation and improvement. However, strategies for improving teaching are at an early stage and are not yet raising standards consistently across all subject areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Disseminate good practice in teaching to secure consistently good teaching and learning across and within subjects.
- Ensure that students receive clear guidance in all lessons and written feedback about how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students enter the college with below average attainment and make good progress in Key Stage 3. The 2006 test results showed variations in standards between subjects, but standards in English, mathematics and science were close to average, and remain so. This represents good progress for most students by the age of 14. Higher attaining girls achieved better than higher attaining boys in English. Boys achieved better in mathematics and science. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities, those learning English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic heritage make similar progress to that of other groups at both key stages.

The 2006 GCSE examination results were well below average and achievement was inadequate in almost all subjects. Boys achieved worse than girls. However, the college has been successful in reversing this trend. Standards are rising and achievement at Key Stage 4 is now satisfactory. This is the result of improvements in students' behaviour and attitudes, the overall quality of teaching, and of a drive to improve leadership and management in some subjects. Some inconsistencies still remain. There are variations in the rate of achievement. For example, achievement is good in English, it is satisfactory and improving in science, but is still inconsistent in mathematics, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching. A broadening of the curriculum to include a greater range of vocational subjects has improved provision and motivation for a significant proportion of students. These students are making good progress in work-related areas such as construction and hairdressing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The personal development and well-being of the students are satisfactory. Their clear enjoyment of school is reflected in the high attendance rates. They are proud of their school and feel that their teachers will always help them.

Students adopt an increasingly healthy lifestyle owing to recent improvements in the provision for healthy eating and the variety of sporting activities that are on offer as a result of the college's sports specialism.

Students feel safe and adopt safe practices. They report that there is always someone to help should a problem arise. Incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and younger students value the support offered by the 'buddy' system. The school's behaviour strategy, based on rewards and sanctions, has been effective. Behaviour in lessons is now satisfactory apart from a small number of cases where teaching is less effective. Students value the relationships they develop with their teachers and there is mutual respect between students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory although the limitations of the present building prevent whole college or large group assemblies. Students of all ages make an active contribution to the school and to the wider community through activities such as charitable events. In particular, all Year 10 students raise the profile of the college by undertaking a one-week community placement that is valued by students and the local community. Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities to experience the world of work and are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The college has comprehensive procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and has an accurate understanding of performance and areas for improvement. However, inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and learning and the good practice which exists in some areas is not shared sufficiently across or within subjects. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and most plan lessons well to clear objectives, matched by appropriate activities. Most teachers establish good working relationships with their students. They manage their classes well, consistently applying the school's behaviour policy. Occasionally, teachers' planning does not take enough account of individual learning needs. The best lessons engage students successfully in their learning but, in other lessons, students are passive and over dependent on the teacher. These lessons lack

sufficient pace and challenge to allow students to make better than satisfactory progress.

Assessment procedures are well established and data are used effectively to set targets and review progress at regular intervals. The quality of written feedback to students varies. There is particularly good practice in some subjects but too little specific guidance to students for improvement in others. The school has identified students in Year 11 who are falling behind their targets and it is providing the necessary mentoring to improve their performance. The evidence from the school's observations and the inspection sample is that teaching is improving at Key Stage 4, with consequent improvements in students' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The college has worked hard on developing the curriculum to provide courses that meet the particular needs of all students, including the least academic and the most able. The college has designed a motivating curriculum which appeals to the whole range of students' interests and talents. A particular strength of the Key Stage 4 curriculum are the courses in vocational studies, using the services of local colleges and work-based learning providers. These courses cater for the needs of 25% of the students. It is particularly well organised to minimise disruption to students' GCSE studies. There are clear vocational pathways from ages 14 to 19. An alternative curriculum is carefully tailored to meet the needs of a small number of disaffected students.

The main curriculum is well supported by additional activities. These allow faculties to offer extra support through clubs and booster classes and extend talented students' skills.

The college's successful bid for sports college status has extended the opportunities it can offer students in sport. It is too early to judge its full impact but there has been meticulous planning to use it as a vehicle for improvements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The college provides good care, guidance and support. Students from a very large number of primary schools and from other countries are supported effectively in their transition to the college and when moving from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Vulnerable students moving from primary schools are particularly well served. Tracking of academic progress and attendance is good and targets are shared with students and parents. Form tutors provide good support for students to enable targets to be met.

The support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is good and there are effective procedures to ensure that those at an early stage of learning English can be

quickly integrated into lessons. Teaching assistants, the school counsellors and mentors are used effectively to provide a high level of support for students' varying needs. In particular, the inclusion unit has helped to reduce the previously large number of exclusions. Those students who have behavioural difficulties have a caring and safe environment in which to work while being given the opportunity of improving their self-control through anger management sessions.

There is strong academic guidance, well supported by Connexions. Arrangements for child protection are well organised and reviewed appropriately and there are good procedures to support vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal provides strong and consultative leadership. Many of the difficulties associated with establishing a new college from two existing and separate institutions have been overcome successfully. There is good communication from the principal and senior managers to staff. They have secured the support of staff and governors for their clear vision and culture of improvement. The college development plan is based on a systematic evaluation of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Behaviour and attendance presented significant challenges and are now measurably improved. Staffing issues have been overcome and the deficit budget has been reduced. In particular, the promotion of higher standards and better progress at Key Stage 4 was recognised as a priority. Improvements have been made and students are now making satisfactory progress. Teaching and learning have been a major focus for improvement. A comprehensive lesson observation system has been introduced. This has succeeded in reducing significantly the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. It has not, as yet, succeeded in overcoming the variations in quality between and within subjects.

Self-evaluation has improved and is satisfactory. The newly established practice of faculty reviews is contributing to a closer monitoring of progress. The self-evaluation report graded most areas accurately, but the college failed to take sufficient account of the importance of the impact of improvements when grading the capacity to improve which was given a higher grade than that awarded by the inspectors. Governors are well informed and supportive of the college. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

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

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	3	3
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	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
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	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, your college was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you the results of the inspection. Firstly, thank you to all of you who met us and talked so openly and interestingly about your experiences. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions.

The inspection found that yours is a satisfactory college. By the end of Year 9, test results show that most students make at least satisfactory progress. In the sixth form, most students achieve satisfactorily. In recent years, the number of students gaining five or more high grade passes at GCSE has been below average and we found that, in 2006, this was inadequate. Your principal and teachers have worked hard to improve this and we found that students in Years 10 and 11 are now making satisfactory progress. We have asked the college to continue to improve performance generally and, in particular, at Key Stage 4.

Another area your college has worked hard to improve is in the quality of your lessons. Your teachers plan lessons well and many lessons are interesting and challenging. Most of you behave well, arrive at your lessons on time and enjoy learning. We have asked your college to make sure that all your lessons are equally interesting and demanding. You can help with this by working to the very best of your ability and listening carefully to your teachers. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you all know exactly what you have to do in order to improve your work. We found that there is a good choice of courses that you can follow, including many work-based programmes that teach particular skills such as engineering and hairdressing. You told us that you enjoy college and feel safe. Remember, your teachers will always help you with problems and you should go to them straight away if you, or a friend, need help. We wish you well with your future studies.