

St Hugh's CofE Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120718
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	295421
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	437
College	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Meenaghan
Headteacher	Mrs Trudy Brothwell
Date of previous college inspection	18 January 2006
College address	The Avenue Dysart Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7PX
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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 college

The school is much smaller than average but is growing rapidly. It is comprehensive but two grammar schools locally affect students' attainment on entry, which is very low when compared with the national average. There are more boys than girls because of a nearby girls' school. Students come from a range of backgrounds but many live in an area of high social disadvantage. An increasing number of students from other parts of Europe, around 10%, speak English as an additional language. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties or disabilities are above average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is well above average. The school has had specialist status in mathematics and computing since July 2003. It became a Full Service Extended School in September 2005. At the time of its last inspection, in January 2006, it was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality of education. Since the last inspection, the main areas of concern have been successfully addressed and, as a result of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the school has made good progress. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Standards at both Key Stages are improving; dramatically so at Key Stage 4 where the percentage achieving five or more higher grades at GCSE almost doubled in 2006. Girls made good progress, an action point from the last inspection. Overall, standards remained low in relation to the national average, particularly in science. However, the school's data for the current Year 11, based on verified results, indicate that standards will improve again in 2007 and be close to the national average. Given the very low starting points of students when they enter the school, they now make good progress and, therefore, achievement is good. Relationships in the school are strong. Students behave well and attendance has improved to be broadly average. There are very few exclusions. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Students are challenged appropriately and there are many opportunities for them to learn independently through research and discussion. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not match work closely enough to students' ability nor review their learning effectively.

The curriculum is good. It has been reviewed effectively since the last inspection and now meets statutory requirements, although the time allowed for science is below that recommended. A very broad range of courses is offered in Key Stage 4, including many vocational and practical courses which match students' needs and abilities. The mathematics and computing specialist status is having a positive impact upon standards, particularly in mathematics. The provision for information and communication technology has been transformed and computers are now used effectively across the curriculum. The extended school provision successfully widens the range of courses and experiences available to students.

The systems for care, guidance and support are effective in ensuring that students' progress and well-being are monitored closely and that suitable interventions are made. Students value knowing where they stand and appreciate the additional help provided. The very good links with external agencies ensure that students receive effective support for a wide variety of needs

Leadership and management are good overall. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has taken prompt and direct action to improve areas of concern. Systems for monitoring performance and evaluating progress are rigorous. Subject leaders are effective in reviewing performance and moving their areas forward. However, development plans lack sufficient measurable criteria to help evaluate progress. There have been substantial improvements in a short time and the school has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the college should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by implementing the proposed changes to the curriculum in science.
- Improve the small amount of teaching that is no better than satisfactory by ensuring that all teachers use assessment effectively to match work to students' ability and to review learning during lessons.

- Ensure that all development plans contain measurable criteria to aid the evaluation of progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Students enter the school with attainment which is very low; on average, over a year behind expectations. The trend in standards by the end of Year 9 is improving, especially in the higher levels, although in 2006, standards remained low. However, students made good progress from their starting points. Standards for Year 11 in 2006 improved dramatically on the previous year and the school exceeded its published targets. The proportion of students achieving five or more higher grades at GCSE almost doubled. Girls made good progress. This represented considerable improvement since the last inspection. Results in English and mathematics were close to the national average but those in science were low. Overall, standards were low compared with the average. The school's data for the current Year 11, based on verified examination results, indicates that standards will improve again in 2007 to be close to the national average. This represents good progress for students and matches that seen in the lessons observed during the inspection. Students are set challenging targets which most now achieve. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as a result of a relevant curriculum and effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students are polite and have positive attitudes towards their learning and each other. Most behave well and the school deals effectively with the minority who do not. Effective procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance have improved overall attendance to close to the average, although the low attendance of a few students is still of concern. Students are supportive of each other. They say bullying is now rare and dealt with quickly and effectively.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and they enjoy the healthy food options provided by the canteen. They understand the need to make safe choices in their lifestyle and behave safely in lessons and around the school. There is a high level of participation in the extensive range of extra-curricular sports. Students take responsibility for the well-being of others and enjoy their roles as 'buddies', 'peer mentors' and prefects.

School council members feel that their suggestions are listened to and have a strong sense of service to the school. Global awareness is well developed through exchanges with other countries. Students organise regular fund-raising activities to support a range of charities. They participate enthusiastically in performances, residential visits and outdoor activities, and show good teamwork in the renovation of the school's canal boat. Good opportunities to undertake work experience, vocational courses and Young Enterprise activities ensure students are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school has made good progress on the issues raised by the last inspection. The monitoring of teaching is systematic and thorough. Students enjoy learning because lively and interesting lessons motivate them to work hard. This is reflected in the good progress students make during their time at school.

A large majority of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better and all were at least satisfactory. Working relationships are good and teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. Teachers use a wide range of approaches to ensure that learning is effective. Searching questions encourage discussion and there are regular opportunities for students to work independently. The pace of work is good. Information and communication technology, including the use of interactive white boards, is now integrated well into most lessons. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and this helps them to make good progress. Where teaching is less effective, pace is slower, work is not always challenging and students are more dependent on the teacher. The use of assessment information to track the progress of students against challenging targets is good. Students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. All statutory requirements are now met. However, the allocation of curriculum time in science is currently less than that recommended. In Years 7 to 9 there are very good opportunities for vocational education in a range of subjects. Good literacy and numeracy support is provided for identified students. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very broad and successfully meets the needs of students. Many vocational choices are available to all students alongside core subjects. In addition, all Year 10 students participate in two weeks of work experience. The curriculum promotes safe and healthy lifestyles through an effective citizenship programme. There is a very good range of enrichment activities. These are popular and contribute much to students' enjoyment of school life and to their physical well-being. The quality of provision in information and communication technology has improved considerably since the last inspection and teachers use it effectively to develop learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Effective induction procedures, including a day activity with Year 8, ensure that Year 7 students quickly settle into the school and develop a sense of teamwork. Arrangements for safeguarding students are secure. Students say they feel safe and there is always someone to turn to if they need help. The school provides a calm and supportive learning environment for students who need help to be successful in lessons. This is highly valued by students and parents. The school works very hard to raise students' aspirations. Careers guidance is good and well matched to students' individual needs.

The good variety of clubs and activities, provided through the school's extended services programme, ensures that vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. As a result, they achieve well. Systems for monitoring students' academic

progress are fairly new in their present form but indications are that they are effective. Individuals or groups of students who are not making sufficient progress are quickly identified and very good support is provided. Parents are informed promptly when progress is a cause for concern and encouraged to be involved in any action. The increasing numbers of students who have English as an additional language receive excellent support, as do their parents and others in the community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and gives clear direction for the school. There is a strong focus on raising achievement which is shared by staff and governors. This has led to substantial improvement in many areas of the school in a short period of time. Senior leaders set clear expectations for staff and students. There are rigorous systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and these are effectively managed by subject leaders. Governors monitor the school's progress regularly and have good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Development plans are well focused but contain too few measurable criteria by which success can be judged. All students are valued and effective action is taken to ensure that all groups achieve well. After a period of high turnover, staffing is now stable and allocated effectively. There are very good links with local schools, colleges, businesses and the community which benefit students' learning and widen their experience. Facilities at the school are continually developed and resources are used efficiently. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the areas identified for action. Many other changes have been implemented successfully and the school has good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	College 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 college work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the college'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	4
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 college require special measures?	No
Does this college require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Hugh's CofE Mathematics and Computing College, Grantham, NG31 7PX

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the team, for your cooperation during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views. We were impressed by your confidence and the positive views you had of the school.

The inspection found that your school has improved a lot in the past eighteen months, since we last visited, and now provides you with a good education. Results have improved, particularly in Key Stage 4, and many of you are now entered early for exams and achieve qualifications in Years 9 and 10. By the end of Year 11 you have made good progress. Your attendance has improved and is now close to the national average. Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school and you told us that the school deals effectively with anyone who doesn't get down to work. Teaching is mostly good and you are now expected to discuss your work and to take more responsibility for your learning. The assessment system gives you regular information on how well you are doing. The mentoring and support provided to you are very good. Facilities in the school are always developing and you now use ICT well across subjects. You have a broad choice of subjects with good vocational and practical options. Your school is very well led by the headteacher and senior staff. It is a school with a very clear set of aims and one which knows exactly what it wants to do in the future.

There are some aspects of the school's work that need to improve further. The curriculum in science needs to change to ensure that your performance in this subject matches how well you do in English and mathematics. In a few cases, teachers need to make sure that work matches your ability and assess how well you are doing as the lesson develops.

We are confident that your school will continue to improve and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg Her Majesty's Inspector