



Pool Business and Enterprise College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112057
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 296417
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Stuart

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Church Road
School category	Community		Pool
Age range of pupils	11–16		Redruth TR15 3PZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01209 712220
Number on roll (school)	769	Fax number	01209 612070
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Malcolm Moyle
		Headteacher	Zelma Hill
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 1999		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	11–12 October 2006	296417

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pool Business and Enterprise College is smaller than most comprehensive schools. It became a business and enterprise college in 2004. Students come from a range of circumstances. Many are from areas of social disadvantage though the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Relatively few students come from minority ethnic groups but this number has increased recently, including a few whose first language is not English. Compared with most schools, there are more looked after students and more of Gypsy/Roma heritage. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pool Business and Enterprise College is a good and improving school. The substantial improvements in recent years, seen in rising results, better opportunities open to students and the positive atmosphere within the college, are appreciated by students and many parents. These developments have laid firm foundations for rapid further improvement towards the college's potential to become outstanding.

A key aspect of the college is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. She is very ably assisted by the governors and a strong senior team with complementary skills that has been built up over the last few years. They are leading the college with conviction and talent, setting a clear vision for the direction of the college. They are successfully developing the skills of other leaders and are taking with them a very committed team of teachers and support staff. An important reason for the progress now being made is the accuracy of the college's knowledge of its own strengths and weaker areas. As a result, it is able to identify its priorities and plan effectively what it needs to do. Another factor that contributes substantially to the college's progress is the very good partnership that has been developed with other schools and colleges through the Excellence Cluster initiative. A further factor is the increasing benefit of the college's business and enterprise status in terms of facilities, an enhanced curriculum and excellent links with the business community.

Students' achievement is good. In some areas of the school's work, achievement is now very good. Students' standards rise as they move through the college and are now approaching national averages and match or exceed them in some subjects. These rising standards are directly related to the emphasis the college puts on the monitoring of teaching and the steps it is taking to improve its quality. There is now much consistency in the planning of lessons so that, for example, the sharing of lesson objectives with students and target setting processes are standard practice. Because of this, teaching and learning are good and improving. But all teaching does not yet match the best and the major challenge for the college is to raise sound, competent teaching to a higher level to encourage students' learning further.

The level of care, guidance and support is outstanding. With very few exceptions, this is much valued by students and parents and contributes to students' good personal development and well-being. Most students behave well, enjoy their education and appreciate the friendly relationships they have with their teachers. The college takes exemplary steps to seek parents' views by using independent consultants to conduct and analyse regular surveys. Most parents are pleased with the college and the relatively few concerns mentioned to the inspection team have been brought to the attention of the headteacher. The college is deeply committed to including all students of all backgrounds, abilities and circumstances.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching reaches the levels enjoyed by students in the best lessons so that their learning is equally effective in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From below average standards on entry, students' achievement is good. Standards are now approaching national averages and match or exceed them in some subjects. Some aspects of achievement are very good, with the proportion of students' obtaining five or more higher grades at GCSE in 2006 exceeding the challenging targets that had been set. Similarly challenging targets were exceeded for the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2006. Present work indicates an improving picture with standards and achievement rising further for students of all backgrounds and abilities.

The college analyses its performance very accurately and, as a result, is able to identify what needs to be done to improve. The action taken to rectify the relative underperformance of boys has been successful and there is now no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. In some subjects where standards have been lower in the past, high quality leadership is now helping to raise standards. Students' achievement in English has improved substantially and investment in modern technology from the college's specialist status has helped raise achievement in mathematics. Whilst variations between subjects and between boys and girls have reduced recently, some variations within subjects remain where there are differences in the quality of teaching. Most students with learning difficulties and disabilities are making outstanding progress because their needs are carefully assessed and action very well planned with dedicated and effective support of teaching assistants for individuals and subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' good personal development and well-being are reflected in the very positive way most of them speak about their experiences and enjoyment of the college and especially about their good relationships with their teachers and support staff. Students grow in self-esteem as they progress through the school. Most behaviour is good and students move responsibly around many narrow, yet tidy, corridors and staircases. Because any anti-social behaviour is managed very well, the amount has decreased significantly in recent years and students enjoy a safe climate for learning. Attendance has improved very substantially in recent years. For all groups of students it is now close to the national average.

Students have a good understanding of what it means to live healthily. Many participate in the extensive sporting activities the college offers. They contribute well to discussions in personal, social and health education, responding maturely to issues of wider society, such as migration and racism. Overall their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many engage very well in the wide range of community work inside and outside the college. The student run theatre company is an excellent example of their working on their own initiative. Students who are trained for their roles in the Student Support Group provide very effective support for other students who are experiencing difficulties. Students' commitment to work experience, their awareness

of key skills necessary for employment and their participation in many work related and business events mean that their preparation for their future economic well-being is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because nearly all lessons have common characteristics that help students to make progress. Objectives are shared effectively with students so that they understand what they have to do in the classroom and for homework. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly with a structure for their lessons that ensures a variety of learning opportunities including discussion and questions. As a result, teaching and learning have improved and are at least sound in virtually all lessons. However, there are variations from outstanding to satisfactory. A large number of lessons involve students actively, proceed at a fast pace and challenge them to learn well and achieve highly. The best lessons are planned around the different needs and abilities of the students tailoring the tasks to fit. Where teachers make learning enjoyable and allow students to develop their own ideas, good and often excellent progress is made. However where students are less engaged and the lesson is dominated too much by the teacher, learning is less effective.

Progress is assessed well by teachers and the many effective teaching assistants, and sometimes by students themselves. This means that teachers can target well the needs of individuals. The best assessment can lead to outstanding progress particularly by those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The sharing of good practice and the rigorous programme of checking teaching by senior staff and subject leaders are the major factors in driving up the quality of teaching and students' learning. These are also the keys to further developing in all teaching the confidence, rigour and dynamism that is already evident in the most successful lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the needs of all students and is responsive to local circumstances. For example, a detailed review has led to a redesigning of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 with three options containing a good range of subjects with a strong vocational focus. The college's business and enterprise specialism has given a strong impetus to widen opportunities and to strengthen the curriculum in information and communication technology (ICT) and business studies. Excellent initiatives such as Enterprise Days involve large numbers of local businesses and encourage entrepreneurial and key skills. Indeed very good links with local primary schools are successfully establishing the business and enterprise ethos with students before they join the college. Another strength of the curriculum is its emphasis on developing literacy skills,

and, where there are weaknesses in students' key skills for the workplace, relevant special courses are provided. Effective partnerships with local colleges and secondary schools add substantially to the overall provision. Procedures to ensure the quality of courses under partnership arrangements are improving. The college is also forging ahead of national developments with innovative plans for a more flexible approach to the curriculum from Year 9 through to post-16 based more on individual learning programmes.

Students have rich opportunities to take part in other activities ranging from recreational clubs and numerous sports to after school homework clubs and Spanish lessons. Whilst many students make excellent use of this diverse provision, a surprising number do not participate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

With major strengths in the college's pastoral provision, care, guidance and support are outstanding. Robust and coherent systems are in place to ensure that the environment at the college is safe for all students. Support is particularly effective for looked after children, students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority communities because all aspects of their progress and development are carefully and regularly checked. There is a very high level of commitment of staff to fostering a caring environment for learning. This is strengthened by excellent liaison with external agencies. The college's provision for identifying and supporting students at risk is exemplary. This includes the successful integration into the college of a number of students who have in most cases been excluded from other schools.

Careful monitoring and evaluation of academic performance ensure that students know what they must do to improve their work. Excellent transfer arrangements with primary schools, commented on very favourably by students and parents, mean that nearly all students settle in very well when they start at the college. With business and enterprise college links contributing very positively, the quality of information, advice and guidance to students about courses, careers and opportunities for work and study after they leave is first-rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with many excellent features. They are having an increasingly positive impact on the effectiveness of the college. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has set a very clear direction for the college with a relentless focus on raising standards and achievement in a supportive environment which includes everyone. She and her senior team have successfully created a common sense of purpose amongst teachers and support staff. Teamwork is of the essence within very rigorous systems of self-evaluation. This has led to sharp and accurate analyses of what still needs to happen to ensure further improvement. Senior leaders skilfully give responsibility to subject and other leaders to put into practice their own plans for

further development whilst providing close support and challenge. The high quality of leaders at all levels is a major strength of the college. Appointments at all levels in recent years have added considerably to the richness of talent within the college.

The college uses its funding well. Business and enterprise college funds are successfully enhancing teaching and learning facilities and are being well used to cultivate further links with business, local schools and the community. The commitment of the headteacher and others to the Excellence Cluster initiative between schools and colleges in the area is bringing long-term benefits to students through enhanced facilities and opportunities and co-operative working between the various partners. Despite narrow corridors and staircases in the older parts of the building, the very attractive state of buildings, facilities and grounds sends a powerful message to students and staff that their well-being and success are important. The governing body is a powerful ally to the senior team. Governors are supportive but not afraid to challenge when necessary. Together, the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are a formidable team. Most importantly, they have created a body of like-minded professionals who are raising the achievement and aspirations of the students in their care.

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?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	1

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	1

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	1
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

Pool Business and Enterprise College, Church Road, Pool, Redruth, TR15 3PZ

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome when we visited your college. Your views are very important. We enjoyed meeting you and we value very much the help you gave us.

We believe you are getting a good education. Your college has improved a lot in recent years. Students are getting better results and you have more opportunities and facilities to study and learn than in the past. Becoming a business and enterprise college has helped, but the college has also worked hard to provide the best types of courses, teaching and other opportunities for you. Behaviour and attendance have also improved. As a result the college is a very pleasant place to be in and most of you are achieving well. You are extremely well looked after and your progress is carefully checked. These things also help you to get on well. Just as important is the good way you get on with each other and the friendly relations nearly all of you have with your teachers and other staff.

A good deal of the college's success and improvement is due to the splendid way your headteacher is leading the college. Her work is outstanding and she is very well supported by her senior team and by other teachers and support staff at all levels. Indeed, teamwork is a really strong feature of the college. When everyone is pulling in the same direction, you make faster progress!

Can the college get even better? Of course it can! In particular we are asking the college to look at ways some of the teaching could be improved further so that your learning is at its best in all lessons. The college is very good at understanding the things it does well and what needs improvement. So we are very confident that further improvements will be rapid. We think the college has a bright future ahead of it. We are sure you will play your part in making it even better. I wish all of you good luck in the future.