

Vale of Ancholme Technology & Music College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118100
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	301962
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianne Young HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	765
6th form	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Glossop
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Hensman
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Westmoor House Grammar School Road Brigg North Lincolnshire DN20 8BA
Telephone number	01652 652908
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team consisting of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Vale of Ancholme Technology and Music College is a smaller than average secondary school situated in the market town of Brigg in North Lincolnshire. Students attend from the local town and surrounding villages. Many students travel to the college each day by bus. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. While the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is twice that found nationally. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. Since 2002, the college has held technology specialist status and, in 2007, a second specialist status in music was awarded. The Artsmark gold award and the Financial Management Standard for schools are also held by the college. The sixth form is a shared provision between the Vale of Ancholme College and a nearby partner school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Vale of Ancholme Technology and Music College provides a satisfactory standard of education. There are strengths in the personal development and pastoral care of its students. The college faces many challenges but its profile within the local community continues to strengthen. Many parents are supportive of all that the college offers, particularly the work done by the headteacher to ensure that every student is valued and included in all the work and activities associated with the college. There is a calm atmosphere in the college, where students socialise well with each other and with adults between lessons and at lunchtime.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy school, feel safe and secure and have a good understanding of what they must and must not do to be healthy. Attendance is above that expected nationally. Students behave well, are courteous to each other, visitors and their teachers. Despite students' moral and social development being strengths of the college, their spiritual development is less well developed. Opportunities are often missed in lessons, for example, for students to reflect on their own learning. Nevertheless, assemblies are used well to promote a healthy sense of well-being and the values of the college. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some challenging and imaginative teaching where students are expected to contribute their ideas and give their opinions during lessons. However, work is not always planned carefully enough and teachers do not make full use of all the available data about students' progress, to ensure that the tasks are suitably challenging.

Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Given the students' favourable starting points in Year 7, this represents satisfactory progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early in their school career and their progress in lessons is carefully tracked.

Despite offering a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, the quality of the curriculum overall is satisfactory, because of weaknesses in the curriculum offered to students in Years 10 and 11. One particular weakness is the college's decision not to teach citizenship, as a discrete subject to students in Key Stage 4, for another year. There is a limited range of subjects for students to choose from apart from those at GCSE level. The work of student services is a strength and is central to the life of the college; the team work effectively in enabling inclusion and equality of opportunity. Their work is valued by students and many of the parents who responded to the questionnaire.

Senior managers understand the challenges faced by the college. Most of the issues from the previous inspection have been resolved, although there is still work to do to ensure that the data about the progress made by individual students is used effectively by all teachers when they plan their lessons. Similarly, the analysis of the findings from the college's monitoring is not rigorous enough to inform and drive further improvement. Members of the governing body are involved in the life of the college and show great commitment not only through their support for the senior team but also in their links with designated subjects. The college provides satisfactory value for money and there is effective capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness and value for money are inadequate. Standards in 2006 were well below average and the progress made by students was inadequate. Internal analysis of the

performance of the current students in Years 12 and 13 indicates that standards are rising and progress is improving. Students' personal development and well-being are good. The students are mature, purposeful learners and some contribute well to the main college community. Almost all complete their courses and their attendance is good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Challenging activities and steps to encourage students' independent learning are key features of the best lessons. However, these features are not evident in all lessons. The curriculum is inadequate; with limited alternative subjects apart from GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced Level (A-level) courses. Consequently, some of the students study inappropriate subjects and struggle to meet the course requirements. Care and support are satisfactory. Students feel valued, enjoy their education and appreciate the effective guidance given; for example, about university and career choices. All students have regular one to one contact with their tutors and the sixth form director. Although this work supports their personal development, it lacks rigour when addressing academic progress. The overall leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in the leadership detract from the satisfactory day-to-day management.

The director of the sixth form has a clear vision for its future development and understands the current weaknesses, which have not been acted on swiftly enough by the senior leadership team. Priorities for improvement have been identified but the current development plan is not robust enough. It does not have clear criteria for measuring improvements, especially in the key areas of standards and students' achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of data from assessment to plan lessons, which meet the needs of all students.
- Use the outcomes of self-evaluation to diagnose what is needed to drive and secure further improvements.
- Clarify and pursue a clear vision, curriculum and strategy for sixth form provision.

A small proportion of the schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The overall achievement of students is satisfactory. Students enter the college with levels of attainment which are just above average. By the time they take the national tests at the end of Year 9, students are reaching broadly average standards and their progress is satisfactory. The progress made by students in the lessons observed was also satisfactory overall. Standards fell in English and science in 2006 compared to the previous year but remained broadly average. The data held by the college indicates that Year 9 students are on course this year to ensure that the college's specialist status targets are met in mathematics and exceeded in science. Unvalidated test results for mathematics and science, recently received by the college, confirm that this is the case.

At GCSE level, standards overall are just above national averages for all indicators including the proportion of students gaining five high grade (A* to C) passes, including English and mathematics. Nevertheless, this masks the fact that the students' progress is no more than expected and, given their starting points, there is still room for improvement in the proportion

of students that reach the very highest levels. Furthermore, the progress made by some groups of students is less than expected. More able girls still do not do as well as they should. However, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make better progress than other groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students say that they enjoy being part of the college and this view is supported by their parents. Behaviour around the college and in lessons is generally good, as is the attitude of students towards each other and to adults around the site. Students' behaviour is monitored carefully and positive strategies are employed to support students who transgress. Positive behaviour and attitudes are encouraged through tangible rewards, which contribute to the positive ethos in the college. These strengths contribute significantly to students' higher than average levels of attendance. The number of exclusions is low due to the introduction of effective intervention strategies. Students say there are only a few instances of bullying and that those are dealt with fairly and promptly. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The provision is not planned strategically nor monitored sufficiently well. As in the previous inspection, spiritual and cultural aspects are weak. Provision for economic well-being is similarly underdeveloped. Although most students leave school with accredited qualifications in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), they have had little experience of enterprise education. The college is encouraging students to develop healthy lifestyles through an extensive sports programme and by increasing the availability of healthy eating options.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some good elements. Since the last inspection, there has been a concerted drive to improve the quality of teaching. Students told inspectors that they are now encouraged to become more involved in their learning. The best lessons proved this to be the case and also made effective use of the key points identified in the college's comprehensive teaching and learning framework. When teachers have high expectations and a clear understanding of what students can and should do, class discussion is used well, lessons move at a brisk pace and students learn well. In these lessons, teachers have a thorough knowledge of students' capabilities and plan lessons accordingly. Despite these strengths, even in the better lessons, there is sometimes insufficient work that is challenging enough for the most able students. In less successful lessons, the lack of challenge results in pedestrian pace. Students, although they comply with instructions, are not involved enough in their learning and not encouraged to develop and expand their answers. Too little use is made of available information about students' progress to discuss with students how they can improve their work. The college recognises that this use of assessment is a necessary priority.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad, balanced and inclusive for students in Years 7 to 9 where all students take drama and the most able have the opportunity to study two languages. In Years 10 and 11, there is an improving range of vocational courses and work-related activities. These, together with a developing pathways curriculum, are beginning to provide better for the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are unlikely to gain five high passes at GCSE level. Citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is currently taught as a cross curricular subject, but the quality varies. Currently, the amount of time allocated for physical education lessons is below that recommended nationally; however, the school plans to increase the time from September 2007. Additionally, there is a lack of a regular, timetabled provision for students' personal, social and health education in Years 10 and 11. A good range of extra curricular and sporting activities, clubs and societies offers good enrichment for students. The levels of participation, although not regularly monitored, are often high. Activities are organised effectively to take into account the difficulties encountered with transport home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The college provides good care, guidance and support for students. Pastoral care is a key strength of the college and much valued by many students and their parents. Arrangements to ensure health and safety and to safeguard young people are in place. The good attendance and low exclusion figures show that students enjoy their time at the college and respond well to the caring and supportive environment. There is a complex and effective web of support for students, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good identification procedures, tracking and support from a wide range of adults in the school, and the many outside agencies, ensure that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress through their time at the college and achieve well. The systems to track the progress made by all students and to guide them on how to improve and achieve higher grades are not sufficiently developed. Students know their targets but are less clear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The overall leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. The college has the support of many parents and has successfully established itself within the local community. Students value, enjoy and speak highly of what the college does for them. Much of this work is due to the headteacher who demonstrates a strong commitment to students' welfare and to providing them with an inclusive school. He and members of the senior leadership team receive support in this from involved and committed governors. They are very involved in the work of the college, especially through their links with different subject areas.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Leaders have an understanding of what has been achieved and what needs to be done. Subject leaders have a secure view of the strengths and weaknesses within their faculties as a result of their helpful monitoring and evaluation activities. They are effectively supported in this by members of the senior leadership team. However, the information collected is not coordinated sufficiently well by senior leadership to provide a whole-school approach designed to impact effectively on the achievement of students. Too much time elapses between the development of initiatives and their impact on practice. The college demonstrates capacity to improve further. Most issues identified at the last inspection have improved; however, the use of data to inform planning and target setting is less well developed.

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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	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	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
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	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
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?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

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?	3	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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	No
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

6 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Vale of Ancholme Technology & Music College, North Lincolnshire, DN20 8BA

Following our recent visit to your college, we would like to thank all of you who helped and talked with us during the inspection. It was clear that many of you enjoy school. We found that Vale of Ancholme College provides those of you in Years 7 to 11 with a satisfactory standard of education and helps you to make appropriate progress in your studies. You behave well in the college, are polite to visitors and your teachers. We enjoyed the conversations we had with some of you as we all moved between the different buildings. The college provides a good deal of extra support to help you overcome various difficulties that could slow your learning. Many of you benefit from this. We saw you working hard in lessons but, at times, some of you are not given work that is hard enough. This restricts a number of you getting the highest grades in some subjects.

There are some significant issues that affect the quality of the provision in the sixth form. Currently, the education those of you in Years 12 and 13 receive is inadequate. Not enough of you are making the progress you should do. The choice of subjects is very limited and does not meet all your different needs and abilities. We have asked the headteacher and other members of the college to improve this situation.

To help the college as a whole improve, we have also asked the governors, Mr Hensman and the staff to:

- make sure that all the teachers use the information they have about your progress and abilities to plan lessons that are matched to your needs
- make better use of what they know from their monitoring of the school to decide where improvements are needed.

We hope those of you who have taken examinations this term will get the results you need, and that all of you enjoy your summer holidays.

With good wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young

Her Majesty's Inspector