

The Hathershaw College of Technology & Sport

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105730
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308937
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1009
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Basit Shah
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Cawkwell
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Bellfield Avenue Hathershaw Oldham Lancashire OL8 3EP
Telephone number	0161 770 8555
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This co-educational college of average size serves an area of considerable social deprivation in the south of Oldham. Fifty one per cent of students come from minority ethnic groups, particularly from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. Nearly fifty per cent of students have a first language other than English. Forty four per cent of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, more than three times the national average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The attainment of students on entry to the college is very low. The college has specialist status in technology and sport. It has been deemed a highly performing specialist college by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. The local authority's Hearing Resource Centre is located at, and integrated within, the college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The college provides a good standard of education and care. It has improved in recent years, dealing vigorously with the issues raised in the last inspection. Specialist status in technology and sport has been used well, particularly to improve resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Senior leaders have keen ambitions for further improvement and there is good capacity to bring this about.

Students enter the college in Year 7 with well below average attainment. They make good progress in their five years here. Examination results in Year 11 have risen in recent years. The percentage of students gaining five or more good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics remains well below the national average, but it is well above that predicted on the basis of students' prior attainment. Results in English are below those in mathematics, although there are clear signs of improvement in the former. Given the very low attainment of students on entry and the good progress they currently make in lessons, their achievement compared with prior attainment is good. Students' good progress and motivation are well supported by excellent ICT provision which helps them to learn effectively throughout the curriculum. Staff have been well trained to enable students to use computers effectively. They have also benefited from a very good range of well tailored training courses to help them to enliven teaching methods. As a result, teaching is rarely less than satisfactory, often good and sometimes outstanding; for example, in ICT, religious education and science. Teachers' enthusiasm shone through in most of the lessons seen. The use of assessment in lessons varies from very good to satisfactory. In some lessons it does not give students enough guidance on how to improve. The curriculum is very good in promoting both academic and vocational learning. The vast majority of students find it interesting and they enjoy their time in college. They rightly believe that it is giving them a solid foundation for their future lives and work. They behave well, in the main, and the few who misbehave are mostly dealt with effectively. The school uses effective procedures to promote good discipline. The rate of exclusions has fallen considerably in recent years, but it remains high. Learning is well supported by the strong care, guidance and support, which includes rigorous monitoring of academic progress. This is well provided in part through the very well managed mixed-age tutorial sessions. In these, older students develop responsibility by helping the younger ones, who value this help. This tutorial provision also contributes to the school's high effectiveness in promoting cohesion between students who come from different communities.

The college runs smoothly. Financial management is very strong. Value for money is good. The building is well organised and maintained, though some parts are dated and others require much managerial effort to ensure they support good learning and behaviour. The headteacher provides good leadership, vision and clarity of thinking. She is unrelenting in her campaign to improve students' learning and achievement and the relevance of the curriculum. She is well supported by good senior and middle leadership teams and an active, though relatively inexperienced, governing body. Teachers have access to a very good range of data on the performance of students, and managers have similar access to very good data on the performance of staff, subjects and the college as a whole. Systematic procedures for self-evaluation are well used. They underpin the accurate diagnosis that this is a good college.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in English.

- Strengthen the contribution which classroom assessment makes to learning.
- Reduce the number of exclusions.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall achievement is good, although standards are below average. Students enter Year 7 with levels of attainment well below the national average and limited skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. At the end of Year 9, standards, though higher, remain significantly below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations has improved steadily, although it remains below average. The progress currently being made in lessons is good, reflecting the continuing improvement in students' achievement. Examination results in science are improving and in mathematics they are close to the national average. The college sets itself challenging targets and exceeds them at GCSE level.

Most students make good progress during their time at college. Progress is greater between Years 10 and 11 than it is between Years 7 and 9. It is better in mathematics than in English and science. For a small number of disaffected students, progress is less than expected. This is influenced by their low levels of attainment on entry, very low aspirations and poor attendance rates. More widely, underachievement is quickly identified and effective steps are taken to address it, for example, in ensuring that boys make good progress towards their GCSE examinations. Students with additional learning needs make good progress and achieve results in line with expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is very well supported by the mixed-age tutor group system, group work in lessons and by the many and varied initiatives such as 'Anti Bullying Week' and the football focused 'Kick it Out Campaign'. Harmonious relationships between the culturally diverse groups in the college lead to a cohesive community. This, in turn, supports positive attitudes towards members of different groups outside the college. Students help and support each other both in lessons and around the college. They have excellent relationships with staff. Students enjoy their lessons and the many sporting activities offered, and most take responsibility for their own and others' behaviour. This is a significant factor in their successful personal development.

Students feel they have a strong voice through the popular 'College Council' and 'Student Conferences'. They have a clear understanding of the college's new and effective procedures to secure good behaviour. The college's breakfast club supports a positive start to the day for those who need it, offering healthy food and sporting activities. Attendance and punctuality have improved to a satisfactory level due to careful and detailed monitoring and a thoughtful reward system.

Students are enthusiastic about the focus on targets. They recognise their benefit and one was heard to say, 'If you get a low target it shocks you into doing better and a good target motivates you to keep on doing good work.' The curriculum ensures they develop team work skills and independence to prepare them for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Harmonious relationships between teachers, support staff and students foster positive attitudes to learning. The high expectations of staff help to raise the students' aspirations.

In the best lessons teachers develop students' skills for learning as well as their knowledge of the subject. Students enjoy and learn from relevant, well-paced and motivating activities. Very effective use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. As a result students make good progress. Two Year 11 students remarked at the end of a science lesson: 'That was a good lesson. We learned a lot.'

In a minority of lessons, not all students are sufficiently challenged. Where teaching lacks variety, pace and focus, students make less progress than they should. Occasionally, class management is not as effective as it should be and this slows the pace of learning.

The recent improvements in teaching and learning are clearly helping students to make good progress in most lessons. They now need time to have a similar impact on standards in external tests and examinations. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of areas where teaching, learning and assessment need to be improved. Good support is given to staff when weaknesses are identified and the school is effective in improving the consistency of classroom practice. Effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and a well-designed staff development programme have led to considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. This contributes significantly to the trend of improving standards and progress.

Assessment is thorough and students' progress is closely monitored and analysed. Very effective electronic monitoring and recording systems for assessment are in place. These are used well by most teachers to support teaching and learning and by managers to identify areas of underachievement. All students know the levels they are working at and the targets they are working towards. Marking is regularly and conscientiously undertaken by teachers but it doesn't always inform students well enough about how to improve their work.

Effective provision is made for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have hearing impairments, and those for whom English is not their first language. As a result, these students make progress in line with their peers. The school is good at identifying its able and talented students and increasingly provides them with appropriate challenges.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully balanced. It emphasises well the school's two specialisms, and is flexible enough to meet a wide range of needs. Students in Year 7 benefit from a foundation course in humanities which eases their transition from primary to secondary school and focuses on improving their literacy. The college's Key Stage 3 curriculum is condensed into Years 7 and 8. This gives students an extra year to complete the Key Stage 4 curriculum via one of the school's four well-planned pathways to learning. These pathways give higher attaining students access to at least one modern foreign language and to early entry to the GCSE examination in mathematics. All students are able to choose one from the three vocational subjects on offer.

Students in danger of disengagement from school and those for whom a highly practical course is appropriate are able to follow alternative curriculum courses, or to work for a diploma in construction at the school's applied learning centre nearby. These offsite courses are monitored closely to ensure that students' needs are fully met. The learning and understanding skills programme being followed in form tutor time is of tangible benefit to their personal development. The good range of extra-curricular activities after school also does much to reinforce learning begun in lessons and to foster students' interests and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college has a very good and wide range of support and intervention procedures. These ensure that all students, including those who are looked after, those from different ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, feel cared for and are able to make good progress. Those students with a hearing impairment are very well supported by staff and resources in the on site 'Hearing Resource Centre' and they enjoy good relationships with staff and students. They, together with more vulnerable students, are increasing in confidence as a result of the good support they receive from a wide range of services.

Fixed term exclusions have been reduced, but levels remain high, particularly among boys. Clear procedures to ensure students are safe are in place.

The sharp focus on learning in lessons helps students to reach challenging targets. They are well informed about their progress and their future options. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress through regular newsletters, parents' evenings and the regular focused 'Success Days'. Sports and social activities encourage enjoyment and the college is inventive in creating opportunities for students to take responsibility.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. They are very sharply and effectively focused on improvement. Leaders have good capacity to improve the college further. The very effective headteacher has enthusiasm and a forward-looking vision for the college. These are well shared by the college community. She is well supported by an able senior leadership team and an increasingly effective team of middle leaders, who are taking more and more responsibility for the quality of the work in their subjects and pastoral groups. Through its specialist status, the college has benefited from additional resources, including excellent ICT equipment, and this is contributing to students' good achievement throughout the college. The governing body is now at full strength and increasingly able to challenge the college in a positive way as well as to support its development. The college's finances are healthy and in good order. Good value for money is achieved. Self-evaluation is based on a wide range of carefully gathered information about performance. It is realistic, if a little modest at times. College development planning is appropriately strategic and concentrates rightly upon improving standards and the quality of students' learning. A well managed system of placing students in mixed-age 'family' groups for tutorial time has resulted in improvements in pastoral care, behaviour and attitudes to learning across the college. The college has very productive working relationships with a wide range of external organisations. It has played a prominent role within the local authority in developing new initiatives, for example, in the use of data to monitor school performance.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

After our visit to inspect your college I would like to tell you of our findings.

- The college gives you good education and care.
- The range of subjects you are able to study is wide and it gives you good preparation for the future.
- Most of the teaching is good. It is lively, interesting and is helped by the good use of computers.
- The marking of work and the use of targets generally help you to learn well, though not always.
- The staff care for you well and the tutorial groups give you good opportunities to get to know students of different ages.
- You get along very well with each other and with the staff.
- Most of you behave well, enjoy your time in school and make good progress in your studies though a few of you need to have higher ambitions for success.
- You have plenty of opportunity to develop as people and to get involved in sports and other activities.
- The managers of the school are always trying hard to improve your education.

Although the college is good overall, three improvements are needed. These are:

- raise standards, especially in English
- ensure that the marking of work shows you how to improve
- reduce the number of students excluded from the college.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future work and activities at Hathershaw College of Technology and Sport.