

Reddish Vale Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106134
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309040
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Janet Palmer 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	1392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Owen
Headteacher	Miss Jennifer Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Reddish Vale Road Reddish Stockport Cheshire SK5 7HD
Telephone number	0161 4773544
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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 four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Reddish Vale Technology College is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school serving an area of relative disadvantage. The college has had specialist technology status since 1995 and has been a full service extended school since 2005. The majority of the college population are of White British heritage and few students are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average, as is the percentage of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The population of the college is stable, with relatively few students joining or leaving the college after entering in Year 7. Attendance is in line with the national average and better than many similar schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Reddish Vale Technology College is a good school. Some aspects of the college's work, such as the provision for care, guidance and support, are outstanding. The headteacher gives an excellent lead in the drive to raise standards and is well supported by her strong leadership team. Together they set challenging targets to raise expectations, which has contributed to significantly improved results at both key stages. In 2007, 51% of students gained five or more higher grades at GCSE, representing a 9% improvement on the 2006 results. These were the best grades so far achieved by the college, signalling good progress by students and a steady improvement over recent years. Standards achieved by students at both key stages remain below the national average, although the gap is narrowing.

Well-managed quality assurance systems ensure that teaching and learning are robustly monitored at all levels and effective support is given where required. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is good and teachers show a strong commitment to raising standards. The college's long-standing specialist technology status enhances teaching and learning across all subjects by the effective use of information and communication technology. Teachers are meticulous in the tracking of academic progress and keep students well informed about what they need to do to improve. In turn, students are keen and responsive in class and achieve well. Overall, the students are polite, happy and behave well in lessons and around the college. They take up the many opportunities to help others as well as to raise money for charities and participate in local community activities. These well organised activities help the students develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

The high quality academic guidance is complemented by excellent pastoral support and a broad curriculum which helps students of all abilities to enjoy their college experience. The college works in close collaboration with a range of outside agencies and local educational institutions to help provide an outstanding curriculum at Key Stage 4. The extensive range of GCSE, vocational and work related courses, including the on-site farm, means there is something for everyone. The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to students' needs. Last year, for example, curricular changes successfully reversed underachievement by some boys in English. The broad academic curriculum is well supported by a wide range of enrichment activities including sports, performing arts, clubs and educational trips. Effective procedures are in place to assess how well students from different backgrounds are doing. However, this robustness is not yet evident in the college's evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of its programme of extra-curricular activities.

The very strong guidance systems and a wide range of courses confirm the college's commitment to supporting the achievement of all students, although work for high attaining students is not always sufficiently challenging, resulting in too few achieving the highest grades. The vigour with which the college has tackled areas of underachievement in recent years indicates that there is good capacity to make necessary improvements in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the performance of higher attainers by ensuring all teachers set sufficiently challenging work.
- Improve the monitoring of students' engagement with enrichment activities to ensure equality of access and entitlement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good and improving. Students enter the college with standards of attainment below the national average. Compared to their attainment on entry, the progress made by students in both key stages is good. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are still below the national average, but there has been an improving trend over recent years and the gap has narrowed significantly. In 2006, achievement in mathematics and science was better than in English. However, in 2007, test results in English improved whilst results in mathematics and science dipped slightly.

In 2007, 51% of students gained five or more higher grades at GCSE and 37% of students attained five or more higher grades including English and mathematics. This demonstrates good progress. At GCSE, students perform particularly well in mathematics, science and music. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress, although the number of students achieving the very highest grades at GCSE is lower than it should be. Very few students leave the college without any GCSE or equivalent qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students is good. The college demonstrates a strong commitment to spiritual, moral and social development and a firm desire to meet the needs of the individual. As a result, students relate positively to each other and to staff, make the most of their school experience and attend well. Students show tolerance and respect for others and this is actively encouraged through the citizenship programme. Students told us that the few incidents of bullying are swiftly and effectively dealt with by staff.

There is a popular breakfast club, healthy meal options at lunchtime and a range of extra-curricular sports activities that enables students who take them up to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students on the college council contribute well to decision making in the college. Others take responsibility by acting as seniors or peer mentors. Students are well equipped with the knowledge and skills required for successful future achievement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are planned with clear objectives and appropriate tasks to engage and interest the students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well catered for.

Teachers make sure that students understand what they are learning and why.

Most lessons are well paced and teachers successfully use a range of appropriate resources, including computers and interactive whiteboards, to enhance learning. Students particularly enjoy the opportunities they are given to work independently as well as discuss and reflect on their learning.

Very effective systems are in place for checking students' progress. Students who are underachieving are identified and given additional support. The marking of written work is generally positive and supportive and most students know what is required of them to improve their grades.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall, the college provides a good curriculum because it knows its students well and effectively plans for their varying needs. Strong curricular links with primary schools smooth the transition for younger students. Good provision for the gifted and talented is boosting their attainment and all students have access to appropriate work related activities. A wide range of enrichment activities are provided, although some students find it difficult to access clubs and activities in the time available in the lunch break. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education is delivered alongside citizenship in well supported tutor periods.

A very strong enterprise ethos prevails. The college holds the Best Enterprise Award for schools in the North West of England. The on-site farm is a particularly well used resource for enterprise, vocational courses and apprenticeships and is a source of interest and wonder for students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school judges the quality of care, guidance and support as good but inspectors judge it as outstanding. This particularly relates to the high quality of pastoral and academic guidance which enables students to enjoy their school experience and motivates them to achieve well.

The college is unfailingly committed to the inclusion of all its students. Care and support are well planned and reviewed and the college works in close partnership with a wide range of outside agencies to enhance its provision. As a result, all groups of students feel safe and well supported. The arrangements for the safeguarding of students including those for child protection are secure.

Many parents have praised the work of the college in helping to settle their children coming in from primary schools and also the way the college keeps them informed of their child's progress throughout. Students tell us that they are very well supported and informed about option choices, career and course opportunities for the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of the college's leadership and management is good. The college's use of challenging targets to raise expectations and gain improved results and attendance is outstanding. One notable example of this is that boys no longer achieve less well than girls.

The ability of senior leaders to make secure judgements about key features of the college's work is excellent. The effectiveness of this self-evaluation is that pupils make good progress. Well planned training programmes are helping many subject leaders to evaluate the work of their departments more reliably and to form constructive plans for improvement.

The college's finances are deployed thoughtfully to support learning and therefore provide good value for money. The governors take a full and active part across a range of college activities and challenge its leadership appropriately.

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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?	1
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	3
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?	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.

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	1
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	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

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

Inspection of Reddish Vale Technology College, Stockport, SK5 7HD

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so welcome at your college. We appreciate the time many of you gave to tell us about your work and other activities. Your college provides you with a good education overall and in some aspects it is outstanding.

These were the things that we found out about Reddish Vale Technology College during our visit.

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team have worked very hard to ensure that the college provides you with every opportunity to succeed. As a result of their support and your hard work, you have achieved the best results so far in the college's history in your SATs and GCSEs
- The quality of care, guidance and support you receive is outstanding. Students who are vulnerable or need extra help are particularly well looked after. You told us that you feel safe around the college and that the few incidents of bullying are swiftly and effectively dealt with by staff.
- The quality of your lessons is good and your teachers show a strong commitment to helping you do well. They are particularly good at tracking your progress and letting you know what you need to do to improve. However, with even more challenging college work, and commitment on your part, some of you could do even better and go on to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
- We found you to be polite and well behaved in lessons and around the college. Many of you take up the opportunities to help other students as seniors or peer mentors, as well as raise money for charities and participate in local community activities.
- The college provides you with a very good range of curriculum opportunities, particularly at Key Stage 4 where there is a wide choice of GCSE, vocational and work related courses. There are also many enrichment activities for you to enjoy such as sports, performing arts, clubs and educational trips. We have asked your teachers to check who is attending the extra-curricular activities to make sure they are the right ones for you and everyone has an opportunity to get involved.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for welcoming us into your college and being so friendly and polite. I wish you every success for the future.