

Hope Valley College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112942
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	311062
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikić HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	573
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Lyn Holyoake
Headteacher	Mr Bernard Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Castleton Road Hope Hope Valley Derbyshire S33 6SD
Telephone number	01433 620 555
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, curriculum, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the college's self-evaluation, scrutiny of documentation and parents' questionnaires, observation of activities, and discussions with staff and students. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

Hope Valley College is smaller than most secondary schools. Students are almost exclusively of White British backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of students with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is above average. The College works in collaboration with ten other schools within a loose federation. It attracts an increasing number of students from beyond the locality.

Hope Valley became a specialist school for technology in 2001, and gained a second specialism for the Arts in 2005. It holds a number of national awards including the Healthy Schools Award, the Arts Silver Award and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hope Valley is a good and improving college. It provides a high quality curriculum for students of all abilities, interests and talents. Strong teamwork, good leadership, commitment and hard work ensure that students experience a vibrant education that contributes greatly to above average standards, good progress and personal development. The principal has provided vision, drive and ambition through successful specialist bids for technology and the arts to transform provision and opportunities for students. This in turn has strengthened the college's position in the community through outstanding partnerships with other schools and colleges, and links with business and industry. Students respond positively to the tailored and flexible pathways, as shown in their enjoyment and positive attitudes. Vocational courses, including construction, provide relevance and prepare students well for the future. The good and improving curriculum is enhanced by regular themed events that support learning across subjects to develop key skills. Students report that they enjoy these activities, which provide new ways of learning and build their confidence. Students enjoy a rich variety of extra-curricular activities, including residential and outdoor pursuits, Duke of Edinburgh award, sports, art, drama and music.

Students enter the college with broadly average standards. The college has consistently enabled students to attain above average standards and achieve well by the end of Year 9, particularly in mathematics and science because of challenging targets, rigorous tracking of progress and effective intervention to keep students on track. Science is a particular strength at Key Stage 3, with significant numbers of students attaining the higher levels. Students respond exceptionally well to high expectations, challenges set and good quality teaching. Students who find learning difficult also make good progress because of targeted support from teaching assistants and adjustment to resources to meet their needs.

In 2007, the number of students gaining five or more higher GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, was well above average. A key feature of this success was the high proportion of top A* and A grades, such as in art, science, communication studies and drama. Despite the good achievement and progress overall, leaders identified differences across sub groups and subjects, and implemented improvement strategies. For instance, exceptional levels of support were provided in mathematics in Year 11 to accelerate progress following previous disruption to learning linked to staff turnover.

The college is friendly and inclusive. A high priority is set on developing the whole student, as indicated by outstanding levels of care, support and guidance. Staff know students very well, individual needs are carefully and rigorously identified and support is personalised. This is shown in the effective support for students with specific learning difficulties, and excellent teamwork across the college. Student involvement in setting learning targets is helping to raise aspirations to reach even higher standards. The introduction of student driven learning and personal goals with form tutors is a helpful complement to this approach, supported by regular review sessions. Students value the dialogue with staff about targets and progress as it challenges and inspires them to work harder. The college informs parents well about student progress. Students are prepared well for curriculum choices, and progression beyond Year 11. Vulnerable students are supported very well and child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are securely in place. The college works effectively with external agencies.

The college has a strong impact on the personal development and well-being of its students, and is highly regarded by the community in this respect. Students say they feel safe and valued.

They know how to stay healthy, and participate in many sporting and performance activities. Widespread involvement in drama productions and music performances successfully promote community spirit and a sense of belonging. Attitudes to learning are good and this reflects the positive relationships they enjoy with their peers and staff. Cases of bullying are rare and students have confidence that staff will address any concerns expressed. Students enjoy college life and are enthusiastic about the increasing range of opportunities and experiences. Specialist status has afforded closer links with feeder schools. Students relish the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership skills and expertise when working with younger children. Students generally behave well and show respect for one another. Where students do not meet the college's high expectations, a range of strategies is available. For example, a nurture group has been established to support an identified group in Year 7. Rewards and celebration events are a regular feature supporting a sense of pride and achievement. Although attendance is just above the national average it has dipped slightly from last year, partly due to term time holidays.

There are good opportunities for students in Key Stage 4 to share views and take responsibility, which contributes to their confidence and maturity. Key Stage 3 students have fewer opportunities. The student council takes a lead role in organising events and shows a strong commitment to environmental issues and charity events. These activities support good social, moral, cultural and global understanding although awareness of Britain's multi-faith and multi-racial society is less well developed. Although provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 has improved since the last inspection, the time allocated to the subject is not sufficient to deliver the agreed syllabus. Although the richness of college life contributes well to students' spiritual development, it is recognised that this could be promoted further with planned provision.

Teaching and learning in lessons are good overall, helping students to achieve well, and often better than predicted. This is due to teachers' expertise, positive relationships and effective use of teaching assistants and learning mentors. Students report that they enjoy most lessons. Where teaching and learning are most effective, lessons are challenging and involve students in a wide range of learning activities that are clearly focused. Students also have good opportunities to assess their work and this engages them and gives them responsibility for their learning. Students report that some lessons are less interesting, particularly when learning is too dependent on working from text books. Sampling of student work highlights good examples of detailed marking with supportive comments to help improvement but this is inconsistent. Although senior and subject leaders observe the quality of lessons, judgements are connected to characteristics of teaching rather than learning. Feedback to teachers is not always targeted sufficiently on improving teachers' skills to accelerate learning for all students. The teaching and learning group provide an effective vehicle for driving and sharing good practice. A recent initiative involving student observers is providing additional insights.

Leadership and management are good. The shared commitment of leaders and governors has led to significant improvements in provision and the learning environment. The record of accomplishments and the steps the college is taking to bring about greater coherence in provision, linked to changes in the student population, indicate a good capacity to improve. Leaders know the strengths of the college and where improvement is needed. Priorities are correctly identified and progress discussed. However, these priorities are not routinely translated into rigorous action plans to set direction at college and subject level to support a coordinated approach. Progress is not always monitored efficiently against measurable outcomes. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in strategic planning such as in shaping the new Key Stage 3 curriculum. Many have benefited from national leadership courses and collaboration with the

federated schools. Members of the governing body are regular visitors through new department links. This is strengthening their knowledge of provision and supporting greater teamwork across the college. Governors have a secure grasp of financial affairs and play an effective role in strategic planning. However, the governing body is yet to resolve full compliance in a number of statutory responsibilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend students' knowledge, understanding and awareness of the different faiths and racial groups represented in Britain.
- Strengthen the approach to improvement planning at college and subject level to enable progress on college priorities to be tracked more effectively.
- Ensure that lesson observations focus sufficiently on students' learning so as to contribute further to improvements in the quality of teaching.

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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	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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.

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	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

10 July 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Hope Valley College Hope S33 6SD

I was pleased to visit your college recently when you were involved in a wide range of exciting and challenging activities, residential visits and work experience. Those I spoke to were clearly enjoying new ways of learning in and out of college. You very much value and appreciate the time staff devote to these events.

I was impressed with your positive attitudes and willingness to get involved in college life. You welcome the new parts to the college and extra resources in technology and art. I know you are looking forward to the new music area.

Hope Valley is a good college. It supports you well in reaching standards that are well above the national average, and the teaching is good. The good curriculum provides you with flexible pathways to meet your interests and needs. You told me that you enjoy most of your lessons, and learn best when involved in a variety of challenging activities. I agree with you that staff support and care for you exceptionally well. It is important to them that you do well with your work as well as developing as confident, responsible and mature young people. The school council is providing many older students with the chance to share views, to help with environmental issues, and organise charity events. Students in Key Stage 3 would like the opportunity to be more involved. I was interested to hear from students in Year 10 that you are involved in a new project, observing lessons. It sounds like this has started well and is already leading to some interesting discussions about teaching and learning.

At the end of the inspection I suggested some improvements to make your college even better:

- To provide more opportunities to develop your knowledge, understanding and awareness of the different faiths and racial groups represented in Britain.
- For college leaders to provide more detailed plans for improvement to help in tracking progress.
- For teachers to check on your learning when they observe lessons.

I believe that the principal, senior managers and governors provide good leadership and can bring about further improvement. I hope that you will play a part in this.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely Nada Triki; Her Majesty's Inspector