

Honiton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113499
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311297
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Massey 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1050
6th form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Price
Headteacher	Norman Tyson
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	School Lane Honiton EX14 1QW
Telephone number	01404 42283
Fax number	01404 44491

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Honiton Community College serves the small market town of Honiton and the surrounding villages. The majority of students are White British and the proportion entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is just above that found nationally.

Although there have been some additional buildings added to accommodate a 50% increase in the college roll over the last 10 years, there are still some limitations to accommodation, particularly for physical education and the sixth form.

The sixth form forms part of the East Devon post-16 partnership with neighbouring schools. Specialist science and mathematics status was gained in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Honiton Community College is a good school. It is also improving rapidly. Good self-evaluation by the senior leadership team has led to the recent introduction of well focused and rigorous systems to support learning, for example, for managing behaviour, tracking students' progress and developing information and communication technology (ICT). In addition, there have been improvements in the curriculum to meet the needs of the full range of students and an extension of provision for the care and support for students, particularly those who are vulnerable. There was a legacy of underachievement in the college and these developments, along with very effective intervention strategies for underachieving students and improved behaviour have led to a marked improvement in achievement and standards over the last three years. As a result, achievement and standards are now good. Students in Years 9 and 11 are on track to meet challenging targets in examinations in 2008. The curriculum is good, providing a wide range of pathways for students that meet both their needs and those of the local community, and prepares them well for the future. The rapid expansion of ICT provision and development of skills for both teachers and students has improved both teaching and learning. Aspects of this exceptional ICT practice in the college have been recognised nationally.

The atmosphere in the college is calm and purposeful. Students are articulate and friendly. They have clear opinions about the college and how it could be improved, although they do not feel that their views are always sufficiently taken into account. They feel cared for and know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem. This is particularly the case for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for whom the provision is very personalised and focused so they not only feel valued and supported, but also achieve well. Some parents perceive behaviour at the college to be a problem, but inspectors found no evidence to support this. Effective systems are in place to manage those students whose behaviour is challenging. Some parents also feel that they are not sufficiently consulted and that their views are not listened to. Opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the community, particularly through the college's science and mathematics specialism, are limited.

Although there is some good and outstanding teaching within the college, the quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Good practice is not regularly and effectively shared across the teaching staff. Many lessons involve far too much teacher talk and not enough active involvement of learners. Opportunities to work independently are limited largely to practical and project based subjects, and this shortcoming has an impact on students' enjoyment of their learning. The quality of target setting and feedback to students through marking is very variable so they are not clear about what they need to do in order to improve. Teachers focus well on coursework for GCSE, but provide less guidance the rest of the time.

The drivers for the progress the college has made, particularly in raising achievement and standards and developing the curriculum, have been a newly formed, energetic and dedicated senior leadership team and middle managers, who are committed to improving outcomes for students. Delegated leadership means that tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined. Leaders have worked extremely hard to introduce systems in the college that underpin the priority of raising achievement and standards. The pace of change has been very fast, and although many strategies are already very effective, some improvements are not yet sufficiently embedded into the way teachers work to have a significant impact. This is particularly the case in terms of generating students' enjoyment, their approach to healthy eating and making a positive

contribution to the community. Nevertheless, the impact of the recent rapid improvements indicates that the college has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision for sixth form students is good. There is a very wide range of courses available, which meet the needs of the students well. The proportion staying on is not as high as the college would like it to be, but this is mostly unrelated to the quality of provision. Indeed, the college is successful in attracting students from other schools to pursue their studies at Honiton. The results in the examinations in 2007 were broadly average in vocational subjects, but generally below average in other AS and A2 levels. However, a series of improvements have been made in provision this year, and although they have not yet had enough time to have their full impact, they have resulted in improved standards, which are now broadly in line with expectations, and the progress of the students from their starting points is satisfactory and improving significantly. This is because the new head of sixth form has introduced a more consistent, systematic monitoring of students' performance, and uses this to take effective action to reduce underachievement. The curriculum is also improving year-on-year because the college is meticulous in consulting prospective sixth formers on their needs and responding where possible.

Students are encouraged successfully to develop their independence and sense of responsibility, and are given very good advice on future options in further and higher education. They are encouraged to have high aspirations for future study. Students benefit from good guidance on how to improve. This good advice comes especially from subject teachers, although some students feel that the involvement of their tutors in identifying the strengths and weaknesses in their studies is not fully effective. The students are cared for well and treated as individuals; their opinions are listened to and acted on where appropriate. They make a good contribution to the rest of the college as mentors to younger students and through involvement in some teaching support activities. They generally enjoy their time in the sixth form, particularly those lessons where they say the teachers show a 'passion' for their subjects. Leadership and management are good, because changes introduced have already had a significant impact in improving the curriculum, care and guidance and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by sharing the good practice that already exists in the college.
- Ensure that students are consistently provided with regular, subject specific feedback through marking so that they know exactly what they have to do in order to improve.
- Provide more opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the college and wider community in order to improve perceptions of the college.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards at GCSE have risen steadily over the last three years and in 2007 the percentage of students achieving five A* to C grades was just above the national average and in line with college targets. When English and mathematics are included, attainment was well above the national average. The progress students made between Year 7 and Year 11 in English was

particularly good. This represents good progress, particularly as students' writing skills are below the national average on entry to the college. In tests at the end of Year 9, students achieved results close to the national average in 2007, but did slightly less well in science than in mathematics and English. Students in both Years 9 and 11 are on track to achieve challenging targets in examinations in 2008 and the recent rising trend is set to continue. This represents good progress from students' average attainment on entry to the college.

Generally girls achieve better than boys except in mathematics, and middle ability students do not make as much progress as those who are more able or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These differences are more marked in Year 11 than in Year 9.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students behave well during lessons, work well together, and are conscientious, enabling them to be well prepared for the world of work. Despite some weaknesses in teaching, their positive attitudes have contributed to the recent improvement in achievement and standards. Very effective development of ICT skills, work experience, a focus on careers and work related learning pathways help students to prepare well for their future economic well-being. Their behaviour is generally good and has improved significantly recently. They respond well to the support strategies that the school provides, which have also helped to reduce significantly the number of fixed-term exclusions and other behaviour sanctions. Students know how to stay safe. However, in spite of robust procedures for tackling bullying, this is still perceived to be a problem by some students and their parents.

The college provides healthy food options and good access to physical activity, including a wide range of extra-curricular sport, but a significant proportion of students do not make healthy food choices. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the community, leading a variety of fund raising activities. Older students have good opportunities to read with younger students, but other opportunities, including using the college science specialism to make a positive contribution to the community, are underdeveloped.

Students' moral and social development is good but their spiritual and cultural development is underdeveloped. They have limited awareness of their place in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

Whilst there is some good and outstanding teaching, the overall quality is satisfactory. Although achievement and standards are rising as a result of well targeted individual support for underachieving students, many lessons are very teacher directed and lack challenge, with few students attaining the highest grades. Where teachers have high expectations, allow students to be actively involved in their learning and ask probing questions, students make more progress and the pace of learning is faster. When students are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through tasks that encourage independence and enquiry, their increased enjoyment makes them motivated to work hard. However, this is not the case in a high enough

proportion of lessons. Students have too few opportunities to assess their own work and progress. Written work is not marked sufficiently regularly or thoroughly to inform students of how well they are doing and how they can improve. Assessments are not consistently translated into clearly understood, personal and regularly used targets, and students do not receive sufficiently subject specific advice on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve further.

Teachers do not have sufficient opportunity to share the good practice that exists within the college.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are well served by a good curriculum, which is reviewed regularly to respond to changing needs and priorities. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is exceptionally good. There is a good range of pathways available from Years 7 to 11, which offer a broad variety and mix of academic and vocational study. For Years 10 and 11, the curriculum also includes opportunities for work experience and education in settings other than the college. Highly successful courses provided in conjunction with other colleges enable students to pursue a variety of interests in areas such as construction and beauty therapy.

The college's specialist status has a good impact on enriching and extending the learning experience of all the students in science and ICT. All students benefit from a work related learning programme, which includes a week of work experience in Year 10. Curricular links with local primary schools are very good, and help students in their transfer to the college so that they settle in quickly. The college does not currently provide the two hours of physical education recommended for all students in Years 10 and 11 but plans are in place to remedy this when the curriculum is revised for the next academic year.

The curriculum is further enriched through a wide range of clubs and other twilight activities, especially sports. Additional lessons, for example in fast track science, are also available for gifted and talented pupils. High numbers of students participate in a wide range of sporting activities, other clubs and educational visits. More students would like to take part in after school activities but are turned away because resources and facilities are limited in some areas. There are some opportunities for educational visits outside of the college, but not enough that enrich the curriculum by including all students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care and support is excellent and the quality of guidance is satisfactory. Many parents commented on the efficient and sensitive way that pastoral support assistants support their children and how helpful it is to be able to contact school by email and receive a quick response. Others referred to the high quality of transition arrangements from primary schools into the college.

The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are considered individually and appropriate programmes put in place to support them. The work of committed and enthusiastic teaching assistants has a positive impact on these students so that they make

good progress even though liaison with teachers is inconsistent so the work provided is not always matched effectively to their needs. Progress of these students is tracked very carefully and staff work successfully with their parents. Outside agencies make a valuable contribution when additional specialist support and advice are needed. Some students are supported effectively in lessons whereas others may spend part of their time in the student support centre. Vulnerable students are provided with alternative learning pathways which allow them to make good progress.

The recent appointment of pastoral support assistants has given time for heads of learning to focus on academic achievement. For example, heads of learning track and monitor the academic progress of students very carefully in order to identify those who are underachieving. Individual short-term programmes, also involving parents, are put in place to support these students. This strategy has been very effective in raising standards. Teachers know individuals well and give good personal guidance, particularly for choosing options in Year 9 and for decisions about future employment or education at the end of Year 11. However, the quality of marking and feedback from teachers is inconsistent.

Robust procedures for child protection and safeguarding are in place. Risk assessments are carried out for the school premises and for off-site activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Over the last few years there have been considerable changes in staffing of senior and middle management, and this has led to significant improvement in the overall leadership and management of the college. Leaders understand their roles well, and give clear direction, focused on improving standards. Senior managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, so planning for improvement is good. Nevertheless, many changes put in place are new and have not had sufficient time to make a full impact. Teachers and governors are consulted well as part of the review of the performance of the college, but with a rapid pace of change, many of them find it difficult to be fully involved. This pace of change also means that some departmental leaders, in dealing with whole-school issues as part of their departmental responsibilities, find that time spent on subject specific issues is too limited. The college uses challenging targets well to raise standards and improve provision, and provides well for pupils with a wide range of needs, achieving particular success with those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Governors support the college well, and their capacity to judge the performance of the school is improving, but at times they are guided too much by the college leadership and lack independent critical analysis.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	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	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

22 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Honiton Community College, Honiton, EX14 1QW

I would like to thank you very much for talking to us and telling us about your college. We found that Honiton is a good school, and improving rapidly. The standards that students at the college achieve and the progress they make have improved substantially in the last few years, particularly at GCSE. The number of students gaining five A* to C grades, including mathematics and English, was well above the national average last year and students taking examinations in 2008 are on track to do even better.

These improvements have happened because the new senior leaders at the college have correctly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school and introduced many changes. The curriculum is good and gives you a wide range of choices to match your interests and abilities. Those of you who are underachieving or who have some difficulties with learning are well looked after and supported.

There are some improvements that we have asked the college to make to help you achieve even better.

- The best teaching helps you to enjoy your learning because it allows you to be actively involved or to work independently. We want teachers to share their skills with others so lessons are more interesting and exciting and make you want to work harder.
- We have asked teachers to mark books regularly and give you feedback that makes sure that you know exactly what you need to do in each subject in order to improve.
- We have asked the college to provide more opportunities for you to contribute to the life of the college and the local community so that everyone can appreciate and value all the good work you do.

I hope you will want to read the full report at www.ofsted.gov.uk. I am sure that it will be soon be available on the college website! I wish all of you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey HMI

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Yours sincerely

Mary Massey HMI