

Kingsbridge Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113521
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311304
Inspection date	13 February 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	1318
6th form	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Arnold
Headteacher	Roger Pope
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	Balkwill Road Kingsbridge TQ7 1PL
Telephone number	01548 852641
Fax number	01548 854277

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • achievement and standards in Key Stage 3 • the impact of the inclusive curriculum on pupils' personal and academic development • the impact of the innovative approach to school development. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Kingsbridge Community College is a popular school serving the rural town of Kingsbridge and the surrounding villages. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or with a first language other than English. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, although the proportion of these students with a statement of special educational need is broadly average.

Science specialist status was granted in 2004, followed by Leading Edge in 2006 and Arts in September 2007. The Teacher of the Year for 2007 is a member of staff at the college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Our daughter is loving it at Kingsbridge. She can hardly contain her excitement as each school morning starts. She is shining, and the quality of teaching and management is clearly of the highest. A brilliant school!' This comment from the parent of a Year 7 student demonstrates the exceptionally high regard in which the school is held by parents, and is an indication of how much students enjoy their learning. Another parent said, 'I am very impressed by the dedication of the staff to provide so many opportunities for positive educational and life-enhancing experiences'.

The school is a very happy community of adults and students who all want to learn, led by an extremely effective headteacher and leadership team. One teacher described the atmosphere as one of 'mutual respect, loyalty and trust' and this is evident from the very positive relationships throughout the school. One student said, 'We are all encouraged to take care of one another.' Older students readily give their time and energy to manage the school council, and to mentor and provide coaching for younger ones. Through citizenship in Year 9 students make a significant contribution to the local community, helping at the local primary and special schools or old people's homes or raising money for charity. Both students and staff feel that their opinions and their achievements are valued. For example, the school council runs its own budget and has instigated a number of initiatives to improve the college community. Support staff make a very important contribution to the life of the college too, with many of them acting as co-tutors to Year 7 tutor groups.

Students make exceptional progress and achieve outstanding examination results at GCSE and in the sixth form. Although progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is not as strong as between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are learning critical skills for later success. The emphasis on 'dynamic learning' methods encourages collaborative and cooperative working, so even the youngest students are articulate and self-assured, and take responsibility for their learning. They develop the skills to be independent learners and are very well prepared for their future as working citizens. Very effective and targeted support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills, allows them to make outstanding progress.

Teaching is stimulating and interesting for students, who understand from thorough feedback how well they are doing and what they have to do in order to improve. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan very effectively. Lessons challenge and actively involve students, with very good use of questioning to encourage extended and thoughtful responses. Excellent use is made of technology to enhance learning. Teaching assistants are very well trained so that they can be fully involved in planning and tracking progress to ensure that each individual's needs are met. Students report that when they find work difficult teachers give generously of their own time to make sure they understand.

The curriculum meets the needs of all learners very well indeed, and the impact of specialist science status is obvious throughout the college. Arts status is new this year and is in the early stages of development, although many students involve themselves in extra-curricular music, drama, dance and art and plans are in place for Saturday morning arts activities next term. Both teaching and support staff give generously of their time and energy to organise a wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips, so there is something available to interest everyone.

Students are particularly enthusiastic about the lunchtime inter-tutor group superstars league, which encourages many to participate in healthy sporting activities.

Students' social and moral development is outstanding and their spiritual development is good. Through international links, and a very popular and effective religious education department, students have an excellent understanding of cultures other than their own, but have less awareness of multicultural diversity within Britain. The staff have very high expectations of behaviour and students respond to this exceptionally well, with maturity and self-discipline, creating a very calm and purposeful atmosphere in the college. Students value and take care of the very pleasant college environment, although they find conditions in the dining room very crowded in spite of the extensive efforts to make improvements. They are acutely aware of safe practices and the school has robust safety systems in place.

Parents and students describe the care and guidance that students are given as outstanding. The transfer from primary school to the college is carefully managed and students settle into the college very quickly. Guidance for the transfer to GCSE courses in Year 10 and then on to the sixth form at the end of Year 11 is thorough and personal. Students regularly talk through their academic progress with their tutor, so they know what they need to do in order to reach the challenging targets that are set for them. There is always an adult to turn to if there is a problem and parents describe the college's response to their concerns as both efficient and effective.

The headteacher, the leadership team and the governors know the college's strengths and weaknesses very well. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, permeating every aspect of school life. Staff skills are nurtured and developed through further training which ensures their commitment to the college's development. Systems for monitoring, analysing data and tracking progress are exemplary, so shortcomings or under-achievement are identified quickly and plans are put in place to find effective solutions. New ideas from any member of the college community are welcomed and then researched thoroughly before they are introduced. One member of staff said, 'We never go stale here.' Extensive consultation means that everyone feels involved so they work together to make each initiative effective. Impact is monitored carefully and systems embedded into the way the school operates. The college is therefore not just innovative, but also committed to rigorously maintaining the quality of day-to-day practice. As one member of staff said, 'They (the leadership team) have ferociously high expectations.' For example, there is currently a focus on the quality of marking, and the extensive induction for new staff ensures that they understand the principles on which the college operates thoroughly before they start work at the school. This dedication to continuous monitoring and development, leading to exceptional progress in recent years, gives the college an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth form students demonstrate very clearly the impact of the extensive work in the main school to develop independent learning skills and self-confidence. They are loyal, positive and very appreciative of the high quality of the education they are receiving, both in and out of the classroom. They enjoy themselves very much, but the atmosphere is also rigorous and hard-working. Students are anxious to support and make a contribution to the main school, with many acting as peer listeners or providing coaching in literacy and numeracy for younger students.

Achievement and standards in the sixth form are also outstanding. The quality of teaching is very high, with lessons stimulating and interesting, providing good pace and active involvement. The curriculum is wide enough to meet the needs of students of all abilities and interests. The new sixth form block, opened in September, has provided an exceptional working and social environment. Students were involved in its design and take a pride in looking after the facilities.

The care, guidance and support that students receive are outstanding. Guidance towards higher education or employment is comprehensive and very personal. Students describe the commitment of staff to their success as exceptional, with work marked quickly and thoroughly and teachers always willing to give up their free time to help them. Their progress is tracked carefully so underachievement can be identified and support provided very quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

Inspectors identified no significant areas for development. A small number of issues such as more rigorous preparation for Key Stage 3 assessments, development of students' understanding of life in multicultural Britain, and consistency in marking have already been identified by the college leadership team, and appropriate plans are in place to make improvements.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

14 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Kingsbridge Community College, Kingsbridge TQ7 1PL

Many of you will remember when inspectors visited Kingsbridge in February. I would like to thank you for the very courteous and confident way in which you welcomed us. We were delighted to hear all the very positive things you had to tell us about your college and how much you enjoy your learning. In return, I would like tell you about our findings and encourage you to read the full report, which you will find on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Kingsbridge is an exceptional and outstanding school. It was clear to us that everyone in your community – you, the teachers, the governors and the support staff – works very hard to make it a happy and safe place to learn where your chances of success are very good indeed. You take care of one another, behave very well and work together very cooperatively. The standards you achieve and the progress you make at Kingsbridge are outstanding because your teachers make lessons stimulating and interesting so that you can learn really well. They also teach you from Year 7 to be independent and take responsibility for your learning.

School is not just about examination results. You enjoy coming to college very much and so attendance rates are very high. You are exceptionally well looked after and given clear guidance about what you need to do in order to improve. You are helped to make good decisions as you transfer from one phase of education to another, for example, from Year 9 to Year 10 or into the sixth form. Teachers give very generously of their time and energy to provide a huge range of exciting activities for you beyond lessons.

The headteacher and his team are excellent leaders and make sure that you and the staff are consulted about the best way to make the college even better. They know the college and its strengths and weaknesses so well that when we made suggestions for improvements, they had already identified what needed to be done and had plans in place.

I am sure the college is providing an outstanding education for you and wish you all the very best for a successful future.

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