

Crookhorn College of Technology

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116428
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312305
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	789
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Vernon Petherick
Headteacher	Mr Grahame Sammons
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
School address	Stakes Hill Road Waterlooville PO7 5UD
Telephone number	02392 251120
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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

Crookhorn College of Technology is a smaller than average school for students aged 11 to 16. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average. Almost all students are from a White British background. Very few students speak English as an additional language. Hardly any are at an early stage of learning English.

The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is above the national average. Most commonly, these students have moderate learning difficulties or behaviour, emotional and social needs. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is lower than seen nationally.

The school was designated a specialist technology college in September 2004. It has the advanced Healthy School award, International School award and Sportsmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Crookhorn is a good school. The four cornerstones of respect, responsibility, commitment and achievement are at the core of the college's work. These values start with the headteacher and his senior leadership team and permeate throughout the college. They have been crucial in bringing about significant improvements in students' personal development and academic achievement since the last inspection. As one parent said, 'Our children have grown and matured in wonderful ways'.

The real strength in the college's care for the students, seen at the last inspection, has been maintained. The college genuinely has the best interests of all its students at heart. All adults work hard to meet the students' needs and in turn, through the development of the house system and mixed year group tutor groups, students rise to the expectation that they too will take responsibility and care for others. Staff know individual students' needs well and carefully monitor their personal development and academic performance. Effective systems are in place to involve students in regularly setting goals to help them to achieve their targets. The curriculum is well matched to the needs and abilities of learners, offering the older students a range of academic and vocational courses to meet their different abilities and aspirations. In keeping with the college's specialist technology status, all students study design and technology with a full range of courses from which to choose. Teaching and learning are now good overall. Generally, lessons are well planned to meet the students' needs and clear and achievable learning objectives are shared with them so that they understand the purpose of the lesson and what is expected of them. However, sometimes there is not enough challenge, particularly for the higher attaining students. The improvements in provision are paying dividends in improving progress, so that all groups of students achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards are broadly average, representing good progress from students' relatively low starting points in Year 7. All students leave the college with at least one GCSE qualification and most gain five or more passes. However, the proportion of students achieving five or more higher grade GCSEs is below average.

The headteacher and his senior leaders set out and pursue their high expectations of the college and its students through an effective programme of monitoring, review and action to tackle the areas that need improvement. Specialist status has been used effectively to bring about change, engaging students and raising the college's profile in the community through the range of opportunities offered, as well as championing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across all aspects of its work. The college is well placed to build on its successes and raise standards further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards by increasing the number of students who achieve five or more higher grades at GCSE.
- Develop teaching and learning to ensure it consistently meets the needs of all students, particularly the higher attainers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Students make good progress although sometimes this has varied between subjects as a result of staffing difficulties which have now largely been resolved.

The standards students enter the college with vary from year to year. In all groups there are fewer students who reached the higher Level 5 at age eleven than is seen nationally. Overall, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have steadily risen since the last inspection because students are making better progress, helped by improved behaviour, better teaching and learning and effective use of target setting. About three quarters of the students reach the expected levels for their age in English, mathematics and science, which is broadly average, although the proportion achieving the higher levels remains below average. The proportion of students gaining GCSE qualifications is just above that seen nationally. However, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades is below average in almost all subjects. In part, this is because despite the good support and guidance from the college, a few students' attendance and attitudes have been a barrier to them making the progress they are capable of. Most students achieve a design and technology qualification. Overall standards in technology mirror the picture in other subjects although there has been some variation between courses.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good rate of progress, because their progress is closely monitored and a combination of academic and pastoral goals is used to help them do their best. Furthermore, students with moderate learning difficulties receive good individual or group support from learning support assistants, whilst those with behavioural, social and emotional needs benefit from strong pastoral support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students behave well in lessons and around the building, making a significant contribution to the positive ethos of the college. They clearly enjoy college, particularly appreciating the warm relationships they enjoy with teachers and fellow students. Students also enjoy their lessons, particularly those in which they can take an active role. As one student said, 'It's just basically a very nice place to be'.

Students understand how to work safely and feel safe in college being confident that help is always available from both adults and their peers. They show good understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and sport is very popular. Students have been instrumental in the introduction of a healthier menu in the canteen and many take pride in the fact that their diet has improved as a result. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Particular strengths are seen in moral and social development. For example, students have a strong sense of responsibility for each other, especially for the younger students in their mixed age tutor groups. They carry out some important roles in college, for example as peer mentors and members of the school council, and in the local community. Groups of students have contributed to an investigation into how to improve local amenities, meeting with their MP to discuss the best way of doing this. Students develop their workplace skills well. Their progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT is good and through enthusiastic participation in enterprise activities, offered as part of specialist status, they gain an enhanced understanding of teamwork and the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have a number of strong features. Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and of their attitudes to learning, and there is a strong emphasis on

self-discipline and independence. In many lessons, enthusiastic teachers with good subject knowledge fully engage the students with purposeful activities delivered at a good pace. Here, knowledge and understanding are acquired quickly, behaviour is good and some students show an exceptional ability to articulate strong balanced arguments that demonstrate their capacity to attain high standards. Teachers make good use of assessment information to set appropriate goals and monitor progress. The use of ICT as a teaching tool has been enhanced through the college's specialist status and this enriches students' learning experiences.

However, in a minority of lessons teachers do not expect enough from their students. Over-direction of activities sometimes limits opportunities for students to learn through discussion, or there is insufficient planning to challenge the higher attainers through targeted extension activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Students enjoy a well-constructed curriculum that meets statutory requirements and caters for the range of learners' needs and abilities. The full national curriculum is provided at Key Stage 3 and there are good opportunities for some students to take GCSEs in a number of subjects at the end of Year 9. Four pathways at Key Stage 4 currently offer students a wide range of options and will be augmented from September 2009 by diploma courses offered by the local consortium of which the college is a key partner. The college's 'Homework: Independent Learning Tasks (HILTs)' initiative is a comprehensive and well thought out programme that gives students planned activities to approach in extended ways at home. The wide range of opportunities to take part in a strong programme of extra-curricular activities, often linked to specialist status, together with extensive trips at home and abroad are greatly appreciated by students and contribute significantly to their enjoyment of school life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college has good systems in place to care for and support its students, with a holistic approach to meeting their pastoral and academic needs. There are good systems to identify individual behavioural and social needs and a wide range of strategies to offer support. For example, students who are in danger of underachieving through irregular attendance are identified early and a wide range of strategies used to ensure they are in college. As a result the attendance rate has improved markedly over the past year and is now satisfactory. The college works well in partnership with others. It is committed to keeping parents and carers involved and informed, in return making clear its high expectations of their support. The very large majority of the parents who returned questionnaires to the inspectors were extremely positive. A range of experienced and well-qualified professionals work together to support students in flexible and sometimes imaginative ways. There are strong links with many outside agencies, providing support in college and also in the community, for example courses for families to help them deal with teenagers. The college has adequate procedures to safeguard its students.

The quality of academic guidance for students is strong. Effective tracking of the progress of each student provides information to set the goals they need to achieve to reach their targets. The students are expected to be active partners in the process. They review their own progress, providing evidence of achievement and discussing next steps at one to one termly mentoring

sessions with their tutor. Students really appreciate this support and show good awareness and understanding of their goals and what they need to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to high expectations of, and for, the students that comes from senior leaders and has been instrumental in bringing about improvement. Students and staff alike subscribe to these values and enjoy being part of the college. The house system is pivotal in nurturing a positive ethos and developing students' sense of belonging to different communities. This is enhanced by their participation in their local community and the contribution the curriculum makes to their appreciation of global issues, although their understanding of living in a multicultural and multi-faith society is less well developed.

A well-planned cycle of self-evaluation, which includes a programme of detailed reviews of each faculty, ensures leaders know how well the college is doing and what the key priorities are for further development. There are good systems in place to set challenging targets for improvement at college, subject and class levels, effectively complemented by tracking and setting short-term goals for individuals. Middle leaders, well supported by the senior team, are growing in strength and taking greater responsibility for monitoring, review, action planning and target setting. Some middle leaders are stronger in these areas than others. Senior leaders know where more development and support are still needed and have plans in place to address this. There is a good partnership between senior leaders and governors, ensuring governors are well informed, have a clear picture of the college's strengths and are involved in strategic planning to bring about further improvement, challenging where appropriate.

There has been good all round improvement since the last inspection with the opportunities offered by specialist status used well to support this. In particular, the improved academic outcomes and personal development demonstrate there is good capacity for further improvement.

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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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

29 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Crookhorn College of Technology, Waterloooville, PO7 5UD

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your college. We enjoyed meeting you and learnt a lot about Crookhorn from the discussions we had with you in meetings, lessons and around college. We know that you think your college is good and we agree with you. You are well cared for by the staff and other students. The teachers know you all very well and, in particular, how well you are doing in your learning. They support and challenge you through your student performance review (SPR) meetings to do even better. Your behaviour in lessons and around the college is good and we know that you particularly enjoy all the opportunities you get in technology and the lessons where you are more involved or active. All in all, we think you are making good progress at Crookhorn.

As with any school, there are some improvements that could be made and we discussed two important ones with your headteacher, the senior staff and chair of governors before we left. One is about raising standards. We know that results at Key Stage 3 have improved and that most of you get five passes at GCSE but we believe that more of you could get higher grades. Secondly, we think that in a minority of lessons there is room for teaching and learning to be even better if teachers made sure that they challenged you more, particularly those of you who are capable of reaching higher grades.

I am going to ask you to help in making these improvements. We think that sometimes some students have not done as well as they could because they haven't attended college regularly enough or their behaviour hasn't been good enough. We can see that this has improved, but we need you all to continue to have the right attitude to learning every day to make sure that you always do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector