

The Henry Cort Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116466
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312326
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Challands

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	885
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Paterson
Principal	Mr P Munday
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Hillson Drive Fareham PO15 6PH
Telephone number	01329 843127
Fax number	01329 846755

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Henry Cort Community College is situated to the south west of Fareham. The college is an 11-16 community comprehensive college of just below average size. A new principal was appointed in September 2006. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average as is the proportion of students entitled to free college meals. Most students are of White British origin. The college is a specialist college in sport (from 2003) and uses this and its community college status to ensure an extensive range of links with its local communities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Henry Cort is an improving college that provides a good standard of education for its students. The newly appointed principal, with the effective support of a re-structured leadership team, has developed good systems and procedures for ensuring that all are aware of the college's strengths and areas for development. As a result, there is a clear focus on raising standards and achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning. Those subject areas where teaching had been weak have received good support and this has ensured that there is now very little inadequate teaching. As a result, teaching and learning are now good overall. Standards are rising and are above average. However, lesson planning sometimes lacks sufficient detail regarding targets for students of different abilities. Consequently, whilst students' achievement is otherwise good a few more able students do not reach the levels of which they are capable in some subjects. The number of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics has been below average for some time and remains so. However, the college has strategies in place to raise this at least to national averages.

Students enjoy their education. This is reflected by attendance figures in line with the national average although there is some repeated non-attendance by a minority. Students enjoy the extra responsibilities they have in lessons and around the college. They also make a considerable contribution to the development of the college community through a very active college council. Many students are directly involved in the local community and numerous charity raising events. They also participate in the very good range of after college activities. Sport, music and drama are particularly popular. Students' involvement in sport has helped them develop healthy lifestyles and an impressive number of students participate in after-college sporting activities. The college has used its specialist college status very well and improved the sporting opportunities available for students in the college and in local primary schools. The specialist status has also been used to support teaching in other subject areas such as mathematics and science where examination results have improved.

A substantial majority of parents have very positive views about the college. They are particularly impressed with the support provided for individual students throughout their college life and one parent commented, 'My child enjoys college and always feels able to approach a member of staff if she has a problem'. A minority of parents felt there were some inconsistencies in how the college responded to their concerns but the inspection team could find no evidence of this.

Changes to the curriculum during the last year have provided a broader choice of vocational subjects and more practical courses to meet the needs of less academic students. This is an area that is still developing and the college is planning to include more vocational courses.

The college's self-evaluation is very thorough and they set challenging and realistic targets for students using a good range of assessment data. There are still inconsistencies in the use of this information by some teachers. As a result, not all students are aware of their targets in all subjects.

The college's improvement plan is a good working document and provides challenging and realistic targets. The leadership team ensures all subjects have appropriate targets and provide good support to ensure that these are met

The governing body have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and provides good support. Recent appointments and improvements to a range of strategies and

procedures means that the college has good capacity for further improvement. It has made good progress in relation to the areas that were identified in its previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consistently implement college policies across all departments especially with regard to lesson planning and the use of assessment.
- Raise standards especially at Key Stage 4 to improve the number of students gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics.
- Improve the attendance of a minority of students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the college with below average levels of attainment. In Years 7 to 9 they make good progress. Their results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2006 were above the national average and students did particularly well in science. In 2007 students achieved well above average results in English, mathematics and science. There has been some improvement in GCSE results since 2005. The number of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes in 2006 is in line with the national average and was similar in 2007. Those gaining five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics is below the national average. Evidence from the inspection regarding present standards indicates an improvement in the number of students on course to attain five good GCSE passes in 2008, although the number achieving five GCSE passes including English and mathematics is still likely to be below the national average. Those students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The vast majority of students are enthusiastic about the college, clearly enjoy learning and behave well around the campus. Attendance matches the national average although repeated non-attendance by a minority of students still presents a problem. Overall, personal development is good with some strong features.

Occasionally lessons are disrupted by unsuitable responses and negative attitudes from a small minority but students feel that this is dealt with fairly and they feel secure because of the support from staff. Behaviour overall is satisfactory.

The sports college status provides many opportunities that greatly benefits the many students who participate in physical activities. Curriculum changes now allow more choice and flexibility and students feel that they are treated as individuals and their views, as expressed through the year councils, are listened to.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with cultural development being particularly strong. Knowledge of other faiths and cultures is good and students understand and value our multicultural world community. One student believes that a visit to Africa changed her life and that the people she met were inspirational. Students show good understanding of health and environmental issues and awareness of how to be safe inside and outside of the college.

The student council is very effective and its contribution to charity work and links with Uganda are a particular strength. Student involvement in the college and wider community is outstanding.

Strong academic and practical skills ensure that they are well prepared for post-16 courses and they are confident enough to make choices that take them beyond their immediate area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and matches the college's judgement though there are aspects of teaching that are relative areas for improvement. The college has developed a thorough, systematic and detailed approach to monitoring teaching and learning, which is contributing to improving standards. Senior and middle managers regard assessment for learning as the prime crucial long term strategy to get to the heart of independent learning and are seeking to embed it in all areas of the curriculum.

Where lessons are most successful, teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations, good levels of challenge plus effective questioning encourages students to think and enables all to participate, enjoy and make progress. Relationships in lessons are usually good and most students have a positive attitude to learning. Students listen well and contribute whenever the opportunity arises, permitting lessons to proceed at a brisk pace. In a few lessons, low level disruption by a small number of students restricts learning. Although many lessons provide opportunities for students to improve their skills as independent learners, there are a few where this is not the case. There is insufficient time at the end of some lessons for students to review their learning.

Most teaching responds well to the range of ability that exists in each group of students. Occasionally, the planning provides too little information about how higher attaining students will be challenged. Strategies for using assessment to help learning are sometimes overlooked even in examples of best practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum and other activities is good, supporting the progress and personal development of the students well. All statutory requirements are met including religious education. Improvements to provision for citizenship and personal, health and social education have recently been introduced. The school's specialist college status has led to improved choice and performance with particular focus on sport. During the last year, several new vocational courses have been introduced and more are planned. The curriculum successfully provides a variety of academic and vocational pathways to higher education that suit the needs of the individual. For example, students are able to sample a GCSE option subject at the end of Year 8. Good use is made of the partnership with local colleges. Additional English and mathematics for some students in Years 10 and 11 ensures that all can work towards achieving nationally recognised qualifications.

A particular strength of the curriculum is the wide and varied extra-curricular activities that involve almost all students in the college. Students' horizons are extended by being able to participate in competitive sports, music, drama, the arts and charity fund raising events. There are many off-site excursions, residential visits, foreign exchanges and international trips that significantly contribute to enriching their learning. The students also profit from on-site activities through dedicated days and enrichment weeks focusing for example, in Years 7 and 9, on

healthy living and lifestyles, and in Years 10 and 11, on work experience and Enterprise Education. As a result, the students are very well prepared for life beyond college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and guidance are well managed. Requirements for safeguarding students and ensuring their welfare are met. Provision for vulnerable students and individuals with specific needs is good. There is appropriate provision for the gifted and talented. The pastoral system is very effective and there are good systems for supporting students, with home college links being particularly strong. Students value their good relationships with teachers and feel able to go to them with their concerns. In discussion most students state that they enjoy college. They are particularly appreciative of the opportunities provided for them to express their views through the 'student voice' and the college council. They feel their views are listened to and respected. Teachers know their students well and provide a high level of support to help them reach their targets. Academic guidance through marking and assessment is improving so that students generally know how well they are doing and what they need to improve but procedures are not yet used consistently enough by all staff. Careers education and guidance is particularly good and is being further developed and refined. Students are given very good advice and guidance on subject and course option choices in Years 8, 9 and 11 and in particular are able to make informed choices about courses at a range of Post-16 colleges.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed principal is very committed to meeting the students' needs and raising standards. He provides effective leadership and is well supported by an enthusiastic and well informed senior leadership team. There is a strong sense of purpose and a focus on improvement and change such as the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The leadership team has a very clear picture of strengths and weaknesses across the college from the detailed and accurate evaluation processes that are in place. The college has developed systems for self-evaluation within departments and subject leaders are starting to use this to set priorities and targets. There are regular meetings between subject leaders and senior managers to monitor progress.

Governors are actively involved in the process of college improvement and are fully aware of the issues needing to be addressed. They provide effective support and challenge to the college's leadership team. Much has been done over the past year to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning leading to higher standards and there is clear evidence that this has been successful. There remain some inconsistencies in the way staff implement agreed policies and strategies such as planning for the use of assessment to improve learning. The college sets challenging and relevant targets that are known by teachers, students and parents. There is again, however, inconsistency across the college, for example, in how staff use assessment data to plan lessons and evaluate students' learning.

The college has made good progress since the last inspection and has effectively addressed the issues raised at that time. The rising trend in standards over the past two years clearly indicate the college has a good capacity to improve further.

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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	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	2
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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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.

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

2 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Henry Cort Community College, Fareham, PO15 6PH

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the way in which you welcomed us to your college. We enjoyed our discussions with you in meetings, in lessons and around the college. You were friendly and polite and most of you were very keen to tell us how much the college has improved during the last year.

We agree with you. The college has improved in many ways and is a good college. You are well cared for and most teachers are working very hard to make sure you all achieve as well as you can. Some of you are still not working hard enough but teachers now try to provide extra support and encouragement to help you as soon as possible. You tell us that behaviour around the college and in lessons is generally good although just occasionally the attitudes of some students can still disrupt lessons. We agree with you but did find that most students were keen to learn, behaved well and were very appreciative of the efforts of staff to help them. Many of you were also enthusiastic about the additional subjects you can now choose and about the range of activities available for you after college. You were also very appreciative of the responsibilities provided for you in college and the very real role the College Council has in influencing change and improvement.

Our view is that this is a good college but that some improvements can still be made.

- Lesson planning should be more thorough and assessment of your work used more effectively to make sure you are making appropriate progress.
- Raise standards in Years 10 and 11 so that more students achieve five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics
- Improve the attendance of a minority of students.

You can play your part in making sure that these improvements are made and that the staff's view that your college can become an outstanding college becomes a reality.

Yours sincerely

John Challands Lead Inspector