

Foxhills Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118089
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	312806
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela M Headon HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	720
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Pattison
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Gallaher
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Foxhills Road Scunthorpe DN15 8LJ
Telephone number	01724 860458
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Age group	11-16
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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

Foxhills Technology College is a smaller than average size secondary school, set within a predominantly urban location. The number of students eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of students are white British. The college was re-designated as a technology specialist college in 2006. The college has achieved the 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

Foxhills Technology College is a good school. Forward looking leadership and an inclusive, supportive ethos ensure that all students are able to achieve well. Students' feel valued and well cared for; their personal development is good and the care, support and guidance that students receive is outstanding. The college has a strong commitment to improvement.

Students arrive at the college with national test results that are broadly average and, overall, between Years 7 and 11 they make good progress. The college's 2007 GCSE examination results continued to improve, with four out of every five students gaining five or more GCSE grades at C or above. The college exceeded its own challenging targets. At Key Stage 3, although standards are below average, students make satisfactory progress in both science and mathematics. Results in the 2007 national tests also showed a significant improvement in English. The college, however, recognises the need to continue to raise standards, particularly in English, between Years 7 and 9.

Care, guidance and support are particular strengths and the college provides a safe and supportive environment for all students. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well cared for. Focused provision, namely the 'nurture group', 'gateways' and the 'academy', ensures that they are able to progress as well as their peers. Attendance, an area for improvement at the last inspection, is now good and the college has low levels of exclusion. Students generally enjoy coming to school and their good behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes significantly to their learning.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Positive relationships between students and staff and the effective use of challenging targets underpin the progress that students make. The college's thoughtfully planned curriculum, particularly the 'pathways' vocational programme at Key Stage 4, provides a very good range of opportunities and has successfully encouraged more students to stay on in education.

Good leadership and management at all levels have been instrumental in securing continued improvements within the college. The headteacher has a clear educational direction and works collaboratively with a committed staff and a supportive governing body to actively deliver better outcomes for students. Self-evaluation is used well to identify underperformance, and progress is carefully monitored through the effective use of ambitious, yet realistic, targets and the consistent and rigorous development of teaching and learning. Good use has also been made of the specialist status through the development of a broadened curriculum and very effective partnership work with other schools. The college provides good value for money and has good capacity for further rapid improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 3, with a focus on English

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the college is broadly average. During their time at college, students make good progress, as indicated by their subsequent attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. The college's 2007 results in national tests continued to show an improving trend of attainment. The college exceeded its targets with four out of every five students gaining five

or more GCSE grades at C or above. The proportion of students gaining 5A* - G grades also increased. Ongoing improvements in core subjects, particularly science, are evident and students continue to make very good progress in a number of performing arts subjects, where standards are above national averages.

At Key Stage 3, standards in English, previously well below average, have started to improve and students are now making better progress between years 7 and 9. Students make satisfactory progress in both science and mathematics. The college continues to set challenging targets in both key stages. It has carefully considered and implemented a range of effective strategies to support specific curriculum areas and groups of students in raising standards further. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Within lessons, students generally enjoy their education and show positive attitudes to learning. They are clear about expectations of behaviour. Movement between classrooms is orderly and students are polite and welcoming to visitors. Although a few parents did express concern that the behaviour of a few has a negative impact on learning, students and parents generally appreciate the support that is available from the college to ensure students feel safe.

Within college, students feel that they have many opportunities to take on responsibility, articulate their views, for example, through the 'suggestion box', and have their voice heard. Students also write their own reviews of learning and during 'review day' they take the lead in the meeting with parents and teachers, helping them to take further responsibility. They also feel confident to go to a member of staff when occasional incidents of bullying occur, and that any issues will be dealt with effectively and quickly. Students have a good understanding of their own well-being and many appreciate the wide range of healthy food choices available. Through the innovative personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHCE), students have had a significant impact within the community; for example in helping to combat an identified issue of the fear of crime. Their moral and social development is good, although their cultural and spiritual awareness is less well-developed. Student exclusions have reduced and the college has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good across the curriculum. Teachers plan carefully in order to engage students in a variety of activities. Opportunities are built in to develop students' independence. Relationships between staff and students are good and students' behaviour is well-managed, so that a positive atmosphere conducive to learning is established. Lessons for lower-attaining students are well-suited to their needs and they receive good support. In some lessons which are only satisfactory, there is too much teacher input and students are not always clear what they are working towards.

The college carries out careful monitoring of lessons and is striving to raise the quality of teaching and learning to the highest standard. Teachers have a good knowledge of students' attainment levels and set challenging targets which are understood by the students themselves.

Regular assessments are carried out in all subjects. These identify underachievement, and a range of strategies is used as necessary, especially in writing, which is a priority for the college. Students are given useful advice on how to improve, although they say this happens more in some subjects than others. Similarly, peer and self-assessment are used well in some areas, but not all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The college's broad and relevant curriculum serves the needs of all students. In every subject, they benefit from being taught in groups appropriate to their ability and enjoy the experiences provided by the specialist technology status. In Key Stage 3 the 'nurture' groups for vulnerable students and 'gateway' groups for those with lower levels of literacy and numeracy have been successful in promoting personal development and academic progress. Curriculum 'pathways' offered to students in Years 10 and 11 enable them to choose combinations of courses closely matched to their needs and aspirations, whilst maintaining a strong emphasis on technology subjects. The focused provision of a range of vocational courses recognises the growing importance of developments within the local economy. There are indications that this curriculum is encouraging more students to access post-16 education. The strength of information and communication technology provision across the college is evident in the standards attained. The curriculum is under continual review and development. For example, when a survey of students identified issues relating to unhealthy lifestyles, the college responded with additional health modules in the PHSCE programme.

Plans are in place to remedy those aspects which the college acknowledges require development. The programme of extra-curricular activities is to be better co-ordinated and marketed. The contribution of all subjects to work related learning has been audited and will complement the very good work experience and 'enterprise' programmes already in place.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. College systems for health and safety and for safeguarding students are thorough and rigorous. There is a high level of sensitive care shown by all staff who have a clear understanding of students' needs. Vulnerable students are identified quickly and there are effective procedures in place to support a wide range of learning and behaviour needs. The 'nurture' group, the 'academy', and the 'gateway' all contribute to the excellent support students receive. Students view these very positively and report passionately on how they impact on their outlook and opportunities. Exemplary transition arrangements mean that new students feel confident and secure when moving to the college. Parents are appreciative of the telephone calls made to ensure that their children have settled in well. During Year 9, students receive careful guidance about which 'pathway' they should choose. This is highly regarded by students. The college has put in place well-planned events and support to encourage students to raise their aspirations for on-going education; for example, university trips for gifted and talented students. Systems used for tracking students' progress are thorough and very effective and information is shared with students. Reports sent to parents are well structured, providing personal achievement levels and targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has established a clear vision that focuses very successfully on raising achievement. He is very well supported by a committed senior leadership team, all of whom make a considerable contribution to driving the college forward. Middle leaders and staff are enthusiastic about leading initiatives which provide students with high quality learning experiences. The monitoring of teaching and learning is robust and subject performance is regularly reviewed. As a consequence, the college sets challenging yet realistic targets, which are actively shared with all stakeholders to improve attainment levels. Self-evaluation is well considered and accurate, and is securely founded on a shared understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. The college has taken firm action to address areas of concern, reflected in both focused developmental planning and well targeted action plans in key curriculum areas. Specialist technology status has been used well to creatively broaden the curriculum and to improve performance, especially in science.

The college has also fully embraced the opportunity to restructure its workforce. This has strengthened their effectiveness and their capacity to bring about sustained improvement. There is a common sense of purpose within the college. There are excellent links with a wide range of external agencies, schools, further and higher institutions. These are used beneficially to extend opportunities for students and contribute to the college's improvement. Governors know their college well and are fully aware of what needs to be done to secure further improvements. They are ambitious for the future of the college and have been instrumental in ensuring the college is fully included in key initiatives within the local area.

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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	3
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	3
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	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	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?	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

21 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Foxhills School Technology College, North Lincolnshire, DN15 8LJ

Following our visit to your college, we would like to thank you for talking with us in interviews, in lessons and at social times about your experiences. This proved very helpful.

We are pleased to tell you that Foxhills Technology College provides you with a good education. Here is a summary of our findings, which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Overall you make good progress and you achieve well in your GCSE examinations.
- You receive excellent care, guidance and support, which you appreciate.
- Teaching is good and you generally enjoy attending college.
- Your behaviour in lessons and around the college is good.
- The curriculum is good and is well matched to your needs and interests.
- Your college is well led and managed and there are clear plans on how to improve further.

So that you continue to do well, we have asked the college to help more of you reach higher levels between years 7 and 9, particularly in English.

Thank you again for welcoming us. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela Headon HMI