

Casterton Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120289
Local Authority	RUTLAND LA
Inspection number	313576
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor 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	762
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Goddard
Headteacher	Ms Victoria Crosher
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Ryhall Road Great Casterton Stamford PE9 4AT
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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. An inspection of the Casterton Childcare Centre took place at the same time. The centre's inspection report is appended to this report.

Description of the school

Casterton Business and Enterprise College gained specialist status in 2005. The college is over-subscribed and it has received a number of national awards. Just over a third of its students come from an area that selects students by ability. The students are predominately of White British heritage. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The college serves an area that includes an armed services base and a Travellers' site, which results in higher than average numbers entering and leaving the college at different times. The college runs full day care nursery provision on site. The college has achieved a number of awards for its work, including most recently the National Association for Able Children Challenge Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good college with outstanding features. Since achieving specialist status, it has made significant progress in raising aspirations and improving performance across the college, especially in the quality of provision. Business and enterprise are at the heart of the college's work and each subject department is partnered with at least one company. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and her senior leadership team, a clear vision has been established for the future of the college, based on the clear principle that every child really does matter. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor the performance of subject departments using the extensive data on achievement that the college collects. As a result, the college's self-evaluation is accurate and it has tackled areas for improvement with great success. An unusually high proportion of parents took the time to complete the questionnaire for the inspection. Two thirds of the responses were completely positive about the college and their views are reflected in these words from one of the questionnaires: 'One of the main reasons we have decided to stay in this area is because we are so happy with the college our children attend.'

Achievement is good and improving. The standards that students have achieved when they enter the college are average. By the time they reach Year 11 they have made good progress so that their results in GCSE examinations are well above average. In 2007, every student achieved at least five GCSE passes and 72% of these were at grade C or above. Although the college has fewer students who have reached the highest levels when they enter the college, more have achieved the top two grades at GCSE than seen nationally by the time they leave.

There is an outstanding curriculum comprising a number of pathways, thereby ensuring it meets the individual needs and preferences of the students. It is supplemented by a wide choice of additional activities ranging from fencing to drama productions. Students who wish to pursue a vocational course can choose from an increasing number of options. Enterprise activities give the students outstanding opportunities to develop skills that will help them in their working lives.

The college provides an excellent level of care and guidance, which results in good personal development and excellent progress by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The great majority of students are confident and mature, or as one parent commented: 'My son has found confidence and has been given a firm platform from which to develop.' Students greatly enjoy college as shown by their good attendance. Their behaviour is good. A small number of parents expressed concern about bullying, but the inspectors found that students felt confident that, in the very few occasions when it did occur, effective action was taken. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, but they would benefit from more opportunities across the curriculum to explore and question their own beliefs and understanding of life in a multicultural society. Students have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and an excellent awareness of how to stay safe. They make an excellent contribution to both the college and to the wider community.

The overall quality of teaching is good and the college is working hard to raise it all to that of the best by sharing good practice through the coaching team. Teachers plan lessons to meet a range of different needs. In a small minority of lessons, however, students are not challenged sufficiently and, as a result, a small number lose concentration. Teachers make good, and in some cases imaginative, use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons.

The college is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and her senior team. The middle leaders are developing well and are being supported by the college with appropriate training opportunities. The college has built up excellent links with a wide range of partners including other schools and colleges, local services and businesses. The governors provide good support. The college has taken effective steps to improve since the last inspection and recent improvements show that it is very well placed to continue its development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers consistently provide activities in lessons which challenge all students.
- Increase opportunities for students to develop their spiritual and cultural understanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are well above average, having risen steadily in the last three years. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 and results in national tests in Year 9 show that an above average proportion of students reached the expected level. Progress in Key Stage 4 is even better, so that in 2007, academic achievement by age 16 placed the college in the top quarter of schools in the country. A high proportion of students gained five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics, and achievement is consistently good in science. The college overcomes obstacles to progress effectively for the increasing number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who achieve exceptionally well. A significant feature of the college is its inclusive nature. Every student who left in 2007 had the equivalent of at least five GCSE passes and the vast majority continued in education or went into a job with training attached.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is very good. The college has done much to help students to stay healthy and safe. As a result they have a good understanding of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles, and they are particularly appreciative of, and participate well in, the range of sports on offer. They are very safety conscious in their daily activities in the college and the climbing wall has provided opportunities to develop a sensible attitude to taking risks. Behaviour is good. Procedures for dealing with poor behaviour are helping to reduce the incidence of disruption by a small minority of students. Students acquire a good understanding of moral and social issues and respond generously to charity appeals. Some benefit from work experience abroad to strengthen their understanding of other cultures. Students undertake leadership roles such as the Junior Sports Leaders Award. Some are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The student council plays a useful role in communicating students' ideas for improving facilities, and some ably represent the college in wider arenas, such as the Rutland Colleges' Council and Young Chamber. There is an excellent college magazine, which highlights many of the students' wide interests and talents and which helps them develop enterprise and business skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the college that teaching is good and students make good progress. In most lessons, the good relationships and consistent management of behaviour have a positive impact on learning. The students show mature attitudes to work and cooperate well with each other. Teachers plan their lessons to provide opportunities for different levels of ability and manage the learning well. They assess how much the students have learnt and give them constructive feedback on how to improve. Teaching assistants support the learning well. In a small minority of weaker lessons, there are pockets of off task behaviour that are not effectively tackled by the teacher, the level of challenge is not high and students are not supported to work independently. The marking of books is variable. In the outstanding lessons observed, excellent relationships allowed teachers to set engaging and challenging tasks which encouraged students to think deeply and creatively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. Achievement has improved as a result. All students in Years 8 and 9 have a lesson each week in enterprise and work has started on extending the different pathways into Key Stage 3. At GCSE, a large proportion of students take either business studies or ICT, which have a very strong vocational element. This vocational aspect is enhanced by additional courses in local colleges. The college is a lead college for the development of Diplomas. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities includes sessions offering revision and additional support for learning. Opportunities to study AS-level critical thinking and additional languages such as Chinese are available for gifted and talented students, who also benefit from their own curriculum pathway.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The college provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Vulnerable students are monitored very carefully. Liaison between the college and outside agencies is excellent and ensures that students get very good support. Child protection procedures are robust and the college ensures students' welfare and safety through careful attention to risk assessments.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding, and the coordinator of this area has a very clear vision, which centres on all students getting the coherent support they need. The assessment of need is very thorough and individual targets are clear and relevant. Carefully targeted support by the team of teachers and teaching assistants helps these students to make excellent progress and achieve very well. Some students with particular needs learn very well in very small groups, where the atmosphere for learning is calm and supportive.

The college has an excellent system for tracking students' progress and identifying those who are underachieving, as well as those who are doing well. Parents and carers are regularly informed about their child's progress through written reports and at meetings. Academic and careers guidance is very thorough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and the senior leadership team work extremely effectively together and they have successfully driven forward an agenda for improvement, which has created some excellent aspects of provision. Excellent use is made of challenging targets to raise standards, both at individual and whole college levels. Systems for monitoring teaching and learning are thorough and the overall quality is improving steadily. For example, inadequate teaching has been removed and the proportion of good or better lessons increased. The college evaluates its work regularly, but has tended to focus more on the opportunities that it provides than on the impact of the provision. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to their work. They are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, but take a less active part in self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The leadership of the college has worked very effectively to provide additional resources both from within the budget and as a result of specialist status. It provides excellent value for money. The outstanding leadership of the business and enterprise specialist status has been at the heart of developing very strong links with the community and the college has been praised for shaping the future of business and enterprise nationally.

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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	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	1

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	1

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?	1
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?	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	2
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	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

18 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Casterton Business and Enterprise College, Great Casterton, Stamford, PE9 4AT

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

We judged your college to be good with some features that are excellent. We were impressed by the way in which the college has used its specialist status in business and enterprise to provide you with such a wide range of new opportunities. An example of this, which you told us you appreciate, is the wide range of subjects you can choose to study and the after-school activities that are available. We thought you behaved well around the school, but we want all your teachers to make sure you are given work which really challenges and engages you in lessons. This will help the few of you whose behaviour in lessons can be disruptive to concentrate on the learning. You have an obvious part to play in this.

Many of you said that you enjoy school, and your attendance is good. It is good to see the ways in which you help others. For example, some of you help to run clubs, as well as volunteering to raise money for a range of charities.

We recognise that the progress you make is good. It is improving each year as more of you are achieving higher standards in tests. This will help you prepare well for your future working lives, as will the increasing number of vocational subjects that you can choose to study. We recognise how the excellent leadership of the principal and her senior team are bringing about these improvements.

We thought you showed mature attitudes and worked well with each other. We want the college to give you more opportunities to think about your beliefs and values and develop a deeper understanding of different cultures.

Thank you for your help in the inspection, for welcoming us into your college and talking to us so sensibly about the things you like and what you would like to see improved. I hope many of you will also read the full report, which has more details.

My colleagues and I wish you every success in the future.

Elaine Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector