

The Glead Girls' Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120712
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313724
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	774
College	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rita Rudkin
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Shawhulme
Date of previous college inspection	6 July 2004
College address	Neville Avenue Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 2EJ
Telephone number	01775 722484
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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 college

The Gleed Girls' Technology College is smaller than most secondary schools, serving a rural community. It is a secondary modern school with fewer students than average of high ability: attainment on entry is broadly average overall. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just above average. The student population is predominantly White British, although there has been an increase in the number of students from different minority ethnic groups. Some of these students are at an early stage in learning English.

The school became a specialist school in 2001 for technology, and in January 2006, gained a second vocational specialism, and extended school status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. Despite recent improvements the college has not made the progress expected since the last inspection as a result of significant changes in senior and middle leadership, instability of staffing, budgetary problems, and emerging weaknesses in leadership, teaching and the curriculum. Although supportive, the governing body does not have the capacity to hold the college to account for aspects of underperformance.

Strong leadership from the headteacher has resulted in action to secure greater staffing stability and the drive to tackle weaknesses in management systems such as planning for improvement. She has recognised the need to raise expectations and aspirations within the college community by challenging low standards and setting up effective systems to monitor the work of the school. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact as shown by improvements in the curriculum, which is now satisfactory with good features, and current tracking records for older learners. The quality of leadership and management is variable across the college and satisfactory overall. Middle leaders are not making consistent use of assessment information and this remains a key area for improvement if the college is to reach challenging targets.

Leaders have created a secure learning environment in which students feel safe and supported. The care, guidance and support for students is satisfactory. The introduction of 'well-being managers' has been popular with students and contributes to good levels of care. Academic guidance is less well developed and the college is taking appropriate steps to improve this in lessons, with support from tutors and mentors. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students to take responsibility, and to develop independence and self-reliance in learning. The college promotes a high moral code and this leads to a friendly and harmonious community. Personal development is satisfactory, with behaviour showing improvement because of more effective systems with a focus on consistency and rewards. The college works hard to improve attendance and has made good progress in highlighting the importance of this to students and parents.

Disruption to learning has contributed to a fluctuation in standards in recent years which have remained below average. Statutory targets have not been met. Achievement is satisfactory, as is teaching and learning but there is considerable variation in the quality of lessons across subjects and teachers. This means that many students do not always make the progress expected, given their attainment on entry to the college, and this applies particularly to the more able. Many lessons lack pace and challenge because work is not planned in sufficient detail to meet individual needs and students do not know well enough what they need to do to improve. Achievement has been stronger in vocational subjects where students show greater interest and enjoyment and appreciate the relevance of the work. A more rigorous system of monitoring is now in place matched by relevant staff development. Although parents are generally supportive of the college, they are rightly anxious about the lack of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Specialist input is now in place to rectify this.

The decision to acquire specialist status in technology and vocational subjects has been an influential in supporting students' personal development, with gains in enterprise and work-related skills. Developments are effectively led resulting in strengths in information and communication technology (ICT) and the expansion of appropriate courses in Key Stage 4.

What the college should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 and 4 by improving the quality of teaching and learning through better use of assessment information.
- Ensure that lesson planning matches the abilities of all students.
- Develop leadership roles at all levels to ensure progress is checked regularly and consistently, and outcomes are used for improvement.
- Strengthen the capacity of governors to hold the college to account for the outcomes of learners.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the college with attainment close to the national average but the selective system means fewer students enter at higher levels. Standards in Key Stage 3 were significantly below national averages in 2006, and fell further in 2007, especially in mathematics and science. Although the college did implement strategies to boost results, the lack of continuity in teaching meant that students could not catch up. This is being tackled by improvements in the use of assessment to raise expectations, and the support of more improved staffing stability. In Key Stage 4, there has been steady improvement but standards remain below average, especially for the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics. The college has already taken action to address this by changing to a modular course in mathematics, which provides a better match to students' needs, and strengthening the monitoring of coursework in English.

Students are benefiting from strategies to support their learning such as the use of learning mentors. The college is successful in ensuring that all students leave with recognised qualifications. Tracking systems have now been established to support the monitoring of student progress, although this is not used consistently or robustly enough by middle leaders and teachers to inform timely intervention.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development is satisfactory with some good features. Their moral and social development is good and reflected in behaviour around the college. In some lessons however, behaviour is weak because they do not find learning enjoyable. From student discussions, it is evident that cultural awareness and spiritual aspects are less well developed. Students get on well with one another and the college operates as a harmonious community. Younger students feel safe, including those who are vulnerable, because they can turn to staff and senior students for support and assistance. In lessons, the picture is mixed. Where lessons are interesting, students show good attitudes and make good progress. At other times, when the work is less engaging, they lose concentration, start chatting and disturb others.

Punctuality and attendance has improved and is now broadly average as a result of the effective action taken by the college to raise students' aspirations and self-esteem. The school council

makes a good contribution to college improvement, but there are not enough opportunities to show initiative and exercise responsibility.

Healthy lifestyles are well promoted through the formal and extra-curricular activities. Many students take advantage of healthy eating options available during the day. Students have a good understanding of the world of work, enhanced through a wide range of business and community links. Students welcome the opportunity to participate in links with the local community to raise funds for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning, as judged by the school, is satisfactory. The strengths and weaknesses of teaching identified in the previous inspection report largely remain. Strategies are now in place to bring about improvements, but it is too early to measure their full impact across the college. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, establish good relationships and generally manage students effectively. Students usually work well and make satisfactory progress. In many lessons, students are too passive because teaching is not planned sufficiently well to meet the needs of all students, or to encourage them to work independently and to think for themselves. Consequently, students are heavily dependent on teachers. Assessment is not always used effectively to provide students with an accurate picture of what they are achieving and what they can do to improve their work. The quality of marking is inconsistent and sometimes does not provide students with the required guidance to remedy errors.

Systems are effectively in place to monitor the quality of teaching, with opportunities to address development points. However, the college does not make the most of the good practice that exists within the college, especially ICT where results exceed national averages because of clear direction, engaging lessons, high expectations, and strong teamwork.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is now satisfactory following recent changes that are providing a better match to students' needs and aspirations, particularly at Key Stage 4. The college's technology status underpins the curriculum at all stages, and students use ICT in a variety of situations competently and confidently.

Links are made between the curriculum and careers opportunities, both in the local area and beyond, which help to raise aspirations. Many local business enterprises readily support the college through active involvement in events such as 'Industry Day', which students enjoy. Parental involvement in option choices in Year 10 has increased because of various college initiatives, and improved communication. Because of the strong links with local further education colleges, students are able to select from a very wide range of courses, which meets their interests.

The curriculum for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is developing following a more effective approach to the identification of needs. Those for whom English is not their home language, are assisted by a well coordinated learning support programme, although they do not always receive the help they need to progress in some lessons. There is a well-organised

programme of careers education and relevant work experience; the curriculum ensures that students are properly prepared for their future working lives.

Significant numbers participate in a wide programme of extra-curricular activities assisted by the college's extended status, which include sports, musical and dramatic events and regular opportunities to take part in events in the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The college promotes students' health and ensures their safety. Arrangements are well developed with other agencies to extend the services available to meet specific needs. Students quickly settle into the life of the college because there are good systems to help them transfer from primary school. Newly inducted students commented, 'Year 11 girls were friendly and helpful, enabling us to settle quickly into the college'. Incidences of bullying and racism are rare and dealt with quickly and amicably.

New systems for monitoring progress have been introduced, and are beginning to have a positive effect on improving students' achievement, such as in English and mathematics in Year 11. However, they are not developed consistently in all subjects. The college recognises that support for students with special educational needs have not been in place until recently with the result that students have not received enough personal help.

Pastoral care arrangements are good with appropriate links between tutors and senior managers. The strength of the provision is the support and guidance for students' economic understanding through careers education, work experience and work-related projects, linked to the college's specialist status. It raises confidence and self-esteem, thereby contributing to preparation for adult life.

Concerns raised by a parent during the inspection are being referred to the appropriate bodies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has an accurate view of the college's strengths and weaknesses and has established priorities to set the direction for the college. Improvements to the leadership and management structure have led to clearer roles, responsibilities and accountability. Good use is made of external support to strengthen leadership and provision. These features are beginning to address the lack of progress made since the last inspection. The college has worked hard to involve parents more actively in supporting learning. They are generally supportive and there is evidence of increased involvement through the attendance at college events.

Middle leaders are involved systematically in the evaluation of different aspects of departmental work but the quality is uneven. Action plans identify the main areas for improvement but do not always include precise details about how actions are to be monitored, or effectiveness evaluated. Links with senior leaders are in place. The college acknowledges that these need to develop further in order to secure future college development at an appropriate, increased, pace.

The college has struggled to maintain a full complement of governors to discharge the range of responsibilities and statutory duties, with the exception of financial management. Governors receive the information they need to form an accurate view of the college's work, but have not

always been able to respond to the messages it contained. They recognise the need to strengthen the impact of their work through training, and the addition of experienced governors.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	College 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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the college work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this college require special measures?	No
Does this college require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Gleed Girls' Technology College, Spalding, Lincolnshire. PE11 2EJ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your college recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you about the college and your learning. Staff work hard to create a safe environment and you told us how much you appreciated this, and that there is always someone to turn to if you need help. The 'well-being managers' got a special mention and older students had noticed a big difference when they were introduced. Many of you said that behaviour had improved in recent years when a new code was introduced. We are impressed with how well you all get along and support each other. You are particularly enthusiastic about the facilities for ICT, the choices available in Key Stage 4, and the wide range of clubs and visits.

You may have heard that, at the end of the visit, we decided that your college needed to improve certain things in order to be more successful. We have asked your headteacher and governors to make improvements so that you make faster progress and achieve higher standards. You enjoy many lessons but some of them are not planned well enough to meet your individual learning needs, or to take account of what you already know. You told us that you learn best when lessons are lively, when your understanding is checked, and you are shown how to improve your work. We think that you need more opportunities to learn independently or in groups so that you are not so dependent on your teachers.

We have asked all the college leaders to check that lessons meet your needs and that you are making enough progress. Governors have not worked well enough with senior leaders in recent years to help you achieve higher standards, and we want them to become more involved in the college's improvement.

You yourselves can help the college to improve further by attending every day, thinking about what you are learning in the classroom, and what you need to do to improve.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Nada Trikić Her Majesty's inspector