

# Faringdon Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123262
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314558
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Mercer HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	941
6th form	119
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Wintringham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Wilson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 March 2005
<b>School address</b>	Fernham Road Faringdon SN7 7LB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01367 240375
<b>Fax number</b>	01367 242356

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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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

Faringdon Community College is a slightly smaller than average comprehensive school, serving the market town of Faringdon and the surrounding rural area. The school has had specialist status in engineering since 2003 and through its extended school status, offers family, adult and community learning courses. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds, with a smaller than average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of students who speak English as an additional language and those eligible for free school meals are below average. The numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), including those with statements of special need, are lower than average for a school of this size.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Faringdon Community College is an outstanding school with a good sixth form. Students are making outstanding progress between Year 7 and 11. Results in national tests in Year 9 have been well above average for the last three years. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics has been above average for the last three years. Significant improvement in students' progress this year, particularly in mathematics, indicates that the proportion on course to achieve this threshold is set to rise substantially this year. Students taking vocational qualifications in Year 11 are achieving very well.

There has been a strong focus on raising the quality of teaching and the proportion of good or better lessons is increasing. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Excellent relationships between teachers and students, and between students themselves, contribute to a positive atmosphere for learning and there is very good individual support for students in lessons. Students are set challenging targets and progress is monitored closely. Students generally know their targets, but not all teachers give clear feedback on marked work so that students know how to improve their work. The school acknowledges that it needs to improve the consistency of implementing assessment for learning.

The school values all individuals and places a strong emphasis on personal development as well as academic achievement. It provides an outstanding caring and supportive environment in which students can flourish as both individuals and as part of the community. This is evident in the high level of commitment of staff to encouraging enjoyment and achievement. Personal development is outstanding. Students value their education and want to succeed. They thoroughly enjoy school and all it has to offer and this is reflected in improved attendance rates, which are now very high. Students are welcoming, confident and show courtesy towards each other and to the adults around them. They describe the school community as being friendly and feel very proud to belong to it. Parents are also very supportive of the school, and pleased with how it supports their children's development and achievement.

The curriculum serves the needs of all students very well. The school meets all statutory requirements and offers a very rich and varied range of courses with considerable choice and flexibility, especially at Key Stage 4. A high proportion of students participate in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. The school is rightly proud of its engineering status, which has led to significant curriculum development involving all subjects.

Leadership and management in the main school are outstanding and good in the sixth form. The headteacher, well supported by governors and the senior leadership team, has established a clear direction for the school and is committed to improving the achievement of students. Strong strategic planning, closely linked to financial management, is sharply focused on improving standards. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Good teaching and excellent support from teachers and tutors enable students to make good progress and achieve results that are at or above the national average. Although there was a small decline in the proportion of students who achieved A and B grades at A-level in 2007,

current tracking indicates that in 2008 this will return to the 2006 level, when it was above average. Whilst average point scores per examination are around the national average, students' combined point scores for all their subjects are often well above average. Progression rates to higher education or employment are very good.

The curriculum is very well adapted to meet individual needs and interests. New courses have been offered in recent years directly in response to student requests. There are productive links with local further education colleges, to offer appropriate guidance and courses for any students who do not wish to take A-level subjects. All students participate in extra-curricular activities, many of which make an effective contribution to their outstanding personal development. Sixth formers act as mentors to younger students in Years 7 and 8. They organise charitable fundraising events, including supporting a school in Uganda. Each year a substantial proportion of sixth form students visit this school, working directly with the Ugandan students.

Teachers and tutors know their students well. Realistic achievement targets are set and closely monitored and students say they receive excellent academic and personal support. The recently appointed head of sixth form has a clear vision for how the sixth form should develop. Senior managers are aware of the need to ensure that the curriculum supports progression from Key Stage 4, where an increasing number of students are taking vocational courses. Whilst each department has evaluated the quality of sixth form provision, this evaluation was not used effectively to inform the overall judgment in the whole school self-evaluation report. Judgements made at subject level did not support the school's overall judgement that the sixth form was outstanding in all aspects.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that teacher assessment and feedback in all subjects enables students to improve their work.
- Evaluate the performance of the sixth form more rigorously to raise standards to the level of the main school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' prior attainment when they join the school is slightly above average and they are making outstanding progress to achieve standards which are now well above average. Results in national tests in Year 9 have been well above average for several years. The school's current tracking indicates that students' progress in this academic year is similarly high.

The proportion of students achieving 5 or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has been above average for each of the last three years and students made good progress between Year 7 and 11. In 2007, whilst they made good progress in GCSE English, the school identified that some students made less progress than expected in mathematics. This year the school has worked hard to make sure that all students make better progress, especially in mathematics. Current tracking for Year 11 students indicates that almost all are making better progress in mathematics. The proportion of students on track to achieve 5 or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is now well above average and overall achievement is very high.

Students with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those with statements of special educational needs, make excellent progress, as do the small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are excellent throughout the school. Many students are reflective and thoughtful and show consideration to others. Students are quick to say, 'I feel included in all parts of school life'. Assemblies are inclusive occasions with excellent opportunities for them to explore moral and social issues. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students show a very good awareness of what it means to be a citizen of the United Kingdom in the 21st century.

Attitudes and behaviour are good overall, and outstanding in the sixth form. Students feel safe, happy and secure in school. They know the importance of healthy living and the need to work safely. They engage enthusiastically in a wide range of physical activities and competitive sport. The school council is effective in promoting students' rights and responsibilities. A wide range of responsibilities, such as the mentor system, enables students to become independent and self-motivated young people. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching is good overall and inspectors observed some outstanding lessons. Students enjoy their lessons and appreciate their teachers' efforts. In the most effective lessons students are fully engaged and teachers' skilful questioning elicits confident student responses. Teachers plan lessons well and this helps students to make good progress, although not all teachers identify differentiated outcomes for students of different abilities at the start of lessons. Where lessons are only satisfactory, the pace is sometimes too slow and not all students are sufficiently involved in the activities. A minority of students cause low-level disruption in a few lessons through a lack of concentration and too much chatter.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school reviews the curriculum regularly to ensure it meets students' needs and interests very well. For example in Years 10 and 11, the wider range of vocational courses available have proved popular with students. Students are able to take subjects early, for example, accelerated languages in Year 9 and extra subjects are available such as statistics or philosophy and ethics to meet individuals' needs.

The humanities engineering course in Key Stage 3 has received national recognition as an example of good practice. In Key Stage 4 all students take a technology or engineering based option. There are frequent trips and activities making use of the strong links the school has

with numerous local businesses. This has led to successful initiatives with local primary schools, such as the Engineering Leaders project.

There is an outstanding range of extra curricular activities including cooking, astronomy, languages, music, and sport, with two-thirds of students taking part in at least one activity. The active programme of family learning activities is well supported. Gifted and talented students value and enjoy the growing programme of enrichment activities designed to extend and challenge their abilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has very effective health and safety procedures to ensure that all students learn in a safe environment. There are very good procedures in place to ensure the smooth transfer of students from their primary schools. Effective careers advice enables students to make informed choices about their future education and employment options.

The procedures for promoting good attendance are very thorough and effective and students' attendance is well above national average. The school sets students challenging targets and monitors their progress closely. There are highly effective strategies to support students who are not achieving well enough. Child protection procedures are robust, thorough and comply with legal requirements. The school works very closely with parents and other external agencies to ensure that all students receive excellent levels of support.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The recently re-structured leadership team, which includes some outstanding leaders for Key Stage 3 and 4, is clearly bringing about improvement in a number of areas including student progress, academic guidance and support. The senior leadership team are working very effectively together in planning and implementing new developments such as the engineering diploma. They are well supported by a strong team of middle managers.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and used effectively to provide appropriate staff development. However, there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to guide teaching and learning and assessment for learning is still under-developed. Self-evaluation in the main school is rigorous and accurate, but some aspects of the sixth form were over-generously graded.

Progress in addressing the issues identified for improvement in the previous inspection is good. The specialist engineering college status has had a very positive impact on resources, particularly those for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and music, and in the expansion of the curriculum and outreach provision.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body is well informed and is well placed to drive development and challenge performance. They carry out their statutory duties effectively. Day-to-day financial planning and monitoring are excellent.

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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	16-19
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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?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	2
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	1	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	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

22 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Faringdon Community College, Faringdon, SN7 7LB

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome and helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you, in your lessons and around the school. Many of you and your parents spoke very positively about the school. We have taken these views into account in arriving at our judgement that your school is now outstanding with the majority of you making outstanding progress between Years 7 and 11. The sixth form is good overall, with most students making good progress.

You achieve very high results in Years 7 to 9. In 2007 some students did not make as much progress as they could during Years 10 and 11, especially in mathematics. This year, this is improving rapidly. While students achieve good results in the sixth form, we have asked the school to make sure they evaluate this performance more rigorously so that they can raise standards in the sixth form, to the same high level found in the rest of the school.

We were impressed by the way you get along with each other and value and show respect and consideration for others. The development of personal and social skills is outstanding. Your behaviour around the school and in lessons is good and attendance rates are now very high. Most of you participate enthusiastically in lessons and enjoy your work. In a few lessons, however, some of you lose concentration and chatter too much in class, and this can disrupt other students' learning. Many of you told us about the excellent support you get from teachers and support staff, who work hard to make sure you can make the best possible progress. Teachers monitor your progress closely and we have asked the school to make sure that all marking and written feedback helps you to improve.

You have an outstanding range of subjects and courses, especially for Years 10 and 11. The school's engineering status is used particularly well to broaden the curriculum throughout the school and provide some good links with business and the local community. Many of you join in extra curricular activities and take part enthusiastically in school and community events.

Your headteacher, senior managers and teachers are committed to improving the school further to give you all the best opportunities possible to do well. We have confidence that the school will continue to maintain high standards and that you will all do your bit to make it a success.

With best wishes for the future, particularly with your forthcoming examinations.

Yours sincerely

Janet Mercer

Her Majesty's Inspector