

Holyrood Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123870
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314748
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1168
6th form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Tuffin
Headteacher	Maurice Hicks
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Zembard Lane Chard TA20 1JL
Telephone number	01460 260100
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holyrood Community School is a larger than average comprehensive school serving a large semi-rural area. Students come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The majority are from White British backgrounds although an increasing number of students, some of whom are at very early stages of learning English, come from other European countries.

The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities has been increasing and is in line with the national proportion. The school acquired specialist status in technology in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Holyrood Community School is an improving school with good capacity to improve further. It provides a satisfactory education with good features. Students enjoy coming to school and appreciate the excellent levels of care and support offered to them. Relationships really do matter at Holyrood. As one student commented, 'Holyrood is a school that encourages you to be the person you want to be and creates a happy and secure atmosphere between students and teachers.' The vast majority of parents have a positive view of the school and a striking number of parents wrote to express how happy their children are at school.

Students' personal development and well-being are good and, in particular, students make outstanding contributions to the school and wider community. Sixth form students set a very good example in this when, last year, 18 of them raised money to spend two weeks working in India in a local school and orphanage. Students have very good opportunities to have their voice heard and the confident and enthusiastic student forum makes a real contribution to the running of the school. Behaviour is good and students cope well with the large site, although occasionally the distance they need to travel has an adverse effect on punctuality and attitudes.

Standards are broadly average and, given their starting points, students make satisfactory progress. However, last year a small minority of students did not achieve as well at the end of Year 11 as expected. This was in part because of staffing problems in some subjects and the disengagement of the students, in particular those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is determined to improve attainment and has implemented a range of focused improvement strategies, both at whole-school and department level. These are beginning to have an impact and the school's monitoring shows that students are making better progress and it is on target for improved examination results this year.

The school has successfully put an emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning through regular monitoring and focused staff training. Teaching and learning are now good overall and this has contributed to students' improved progress in lessons. Relationships between staff and students are a real strength and lead to positive learning environments. One teacher commented that 'students and staff are on the same side'. Many underachieving students are targeted for additional support, but systems for monitoring students' overall progress and giving clear academic guidance are not yet fully implemented and some students do not always make as rapid progress as they might.

The school has recently undertaken a review of the curriculum in response to its focus on raising achievement. This is leading to a more individualised curriculum for students. In particular, the school is introducing a greater range of relevant courses and support for the less academic and demotivated students.

The school's specialist status in technology has had a positive impact on provision, in particular in the development and use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. The community element of the school's work is outstanding, for example by providing a mobile technology resource for primary schools and the inclusion of families in family learning days. Students appreciate and participate in the wide variety of activities and extended opportunities offered by the school, including trips such as the Swingband's biennial European tour.

The headteacher and senior leadership team work tirelessly and have a clear and determined vision for the school. This is shared by all staff and governors who have confidence in the

headteacher's incisive leadership. One teacher commented, 'he brings a sense of purpose to the work we do'. Throughout the school there is a clear focus on raising the level of achievement of all students and school self-evaluation is both honest and accurate. The school has made great strides in collecting data about students and this is influencing the work of the classroom teachers. However, the school is not yet using data well enough to analyse trends and evaluate the impact of provision and changes to provision on various groups of students. The school has rightly identified this as an area for improvement. The school has put in place appropriate actions to systematically make improvements and shows good capacity to bring about improvement.

A small proportion of schools judged to be satisfactory but with areas of underperformance will be monitored in accordance with the protocol published in November 2006.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is effective in providing a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of a wide range of students. Students generally make satisfactory progress because teaching is challenging and students find learning rewarding. All staff work hard to ensure that all students do the best they can. Systems for providing students with clear academic guidance are robust and they are very positive about the difference that this makes although it is too early to judge the impact on examination results.

Students are very positive about their sixth form experience. 'Being at Holyrood is to be valued for who you are' was typical of many such comments. The school actively seeks students' views in order to improve its performance and students are keen to be involved in this process. Many volunteer to help in a variety of ways, both in school and in the wider community, and this, along with the guidance that the school provides, helps them develop into rounded and mature young people with broader horizons and an understanding of other cultures. The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of sixth form sets a clear direction based on a good understanding of the students' needs although school leaders' have not yet sufficiently developed the analysis of data to provide a strategic overview of standards and whether improvement measures are having a positive effect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure strategies to raise attainment at Key Stage 4 are consistently applied, particularly for those students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Extend and make more consistent systems for monitoring students' academic progress and for giving focused advice on how to improve.
- Develop the strategic use of data to analyse trends and evaluate the impact of provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' attainment when they start Year 7 is slightly below average, particularly in their literacy skills. Through the first three years they make satisfactory progress and results in tests at the end of Year 9 are generally in line with national benchmarks, although in 2006 the proportion of students attaining a Level 5 or above in English dipped.

The proportion of students attaining five or more good (A* to C) grades at GCSE including mathematics and English is in line with the national average, as is the percentage of students attaining five or more passes at GCSE. However, the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades overall was below the national average in 2006. This was partly because of staffing difficulties in some key subjects and partly because of the underachievement of a minority of students, in particular those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. However, this represents satisfactory progress overall.

All departments are implementing strategic action plans to improve attainment and specific departments are receiving focused support and training. There is evidence that students are now beginning to make better progress. The school expects to meet its academic targets this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good and, in particular, students' contribution to both the school and local community is outstanding. Students in all years are keen to be involved, whether through the student forum, by becoming buddies or mentors to younger students or through helping older citizens get to grips with the Internet in the 'seniors-on-line' courses. Students' social, moral and spiritual development is good and they are more aware of the variety and richness of other cultures than previously. They develop a clear sense of what is right and wrong through the school's consistent approach towards behaviour and opportunities to discuss difficult issues in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. They know that their ideas influence school decisions and enjoy suggesting improvements.

Students enjoy learning and most attend school regularly, although a small but significant minority do not attend as well as they should, despite the efforts made by the school to get them to attend. Students say that they feel safe and very well-cared for. Behaviour is good and although there is occasional bullying students feel that it is quickly dealt with and stopped. The introduction of an inclusion base, to support and change attitudes of the minority of students who behave badly, is often successful although there is a hard core of re-offenders.

The school has achieved Healthy School status. The student forum has been very active in promoting healthy eating and the majority of students enjoy physical education and do extra after school, as well as walking between sites every day. Students develop skills which will be useful in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject and their students and teaching is good. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and learning proceeds at a good pace. Students are frequently given opportunities to explain and share their ideas with each other and do so enthusiastically. In one outstanding lesson the teacher used a wide range of teaching strategies including games, video and small group work to inspire and engage

students in learning about the factors causing immigration and emigration in north-east Brazil. Sometimes, however, activities are not well enough matched to individual students' needs and some students are not extended or supported as well as they might be. Many books contain helpful comments about how to improve work.

The school has invested much time in improving the quality of teaching using its own excellent practitioners to mentor and support colleagues. The school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and there is evidence that this investment is working. The school has championed learning in the heart of the community and as part of the school's specialist status some 450 families have taken part in Family Learning Days.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum has satisfactory breadth and balance with a good range of extra-curricular activities, although it does not meet the needs of all students. The school has identified the need to adjust and moderate provision to match students' needs better and to raise standards. As a result, it is in the process of developing and implementing some innovative adjustments to the curriculum to be implemented in September 2007. A good example is the development of the new two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum for technology which will allow current Year 8 students to extend and personalise their technology choices over the next three years.

Earlier identification of underachieving students has led to an increase in the use of small groups and one-to-one teaching to help students improve their rate of progress. This has been particularly successful in Year 7 where the 'flexible learning base' has helped to settle some new students quickly into school routines and reduce disruptive behaviour. In Key Stage 4 the school has successfully extended the range of vocational courses, despite the difficulties encountered because the school is a considerable distance from outside providers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care and pastoral support are excellent and systems to provide academic guidance and support are developing. Child protection is taken very seriously and secure records are kept. The school is taking appropriate action to improve the security and the safety of students on the large split site. In conjunction with outside agencies the school runs many projects to help specific groups of students; a particular success is the 'breakthrough project' to support underachieving boys. An excellent system of induction and links with primary schools ensures that there is a good start for all pupils. One Year 7 pupil, commenting about his first year, said 'It's been brilliant!'

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are given good support in many lessons because teachers have good information about their problems and the strategies to overcome them. Systems to allow tutors to monitor students' progress effectively and provide good academic guidance based on a range of information are not yet fully in place. This means that not all students make rapid progress towards their challenging targets. The school works hard to keep parents informed and involved in their children's education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good because leadership at all levels is focused on school improvement and the provision of a high level of care for the students. The headteacher is held in high esteem across both the school and the local community. Members of the dedicated leadership team are honest and accurate in their evaluation of the school and in identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Recent difficulties over staffing have been addressed in a sensitive but robust manner.

Performance is rigorously monitored in the classroom and linked to the professional development of staff. This is paying dividends in improved teaching. Recent timely reviews at both whole-school and subject level and strategic focused actions are beginning to lead to improvement in standards and in students' achievement. Staff are clearly aware of the targets set and the achievement needed by students in their care. The school collects a wide range of assessment data but does not undertake sufficient evaluation to judge the impact of provision and the improvement measures taken.

The school's resources are used very effectively and efficiently to ensure that learners are well taught. This can be seen in the restructuring of the school's difficult physical environment into specialist subject areas and the provision of equipment that enhances learning experiences. Governance is good and governors work hard for the school. They are linked to individual departments, offering critical support, and as a body they hold the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3	

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?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
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	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

18 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Holyrood Community School, Chard, TA20 1JL

I am writing on behalf of the other inspectors and myself to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

We think Holyrood Community School provides you with a satisfactory education. It has good features and the potential to improve even further.

Relationships really do matter at Holyrood and we think this is a big strength of the school. Your attitudes and behaviour both in lessons and around the school are good. We feel you are well looked after and given good support. We were particularly impressed with the contribution you make to the running of the school both through your student forum and your enthusiasm to be involved in taking on additional responsibilities. You also told us that you appreciated the wide variety of activities and extended opportunities offered by the school including trips such as the sixth form visit to India and the Swingband's forthcoming tour of Belgium.

We agree with the school that teaching and learning have improved and we saw a lot of good teaching. However, we feel that some GCSE results could be higher and some students could do better than they already do.

To make your school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- continue the work they have already started to improve examination results particularly at Key Stage 4
- develop systems for monitoring your academic progress and for giving you focused advice on how to improve
- develop the school's systems for analysing and evaluating the work that it does.

Your headteacher and teachers are committed to getting things right for you and we are sure you will continue to support them in this. Thank you again for helping us with our work and making our visit to your school so enjoyable.

Yours faithfully

Maria Dawes Her Majesty's Inspector