

Redruth School a Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112054
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325520
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk 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 (total)	1285
Sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ross Williams
Headteacher	Paul Sharratt
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2009
School address	Tolgus Vean Redruth TR15 1TA
Telephone number	01209 203700
Fax number	01209 313604

Age group	11–18
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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

Redruth School is a larger than average secondary school with a small sixth form. The school has link sixth form arrangements with a local community school and a college of further education. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. The range of students' needs is complex and includes specific learning difficulties and behavioural and emotional difficulties. The school has continued to experience considerable changes in staff since the last inspection and some leadership and management posts have only recently been filled. In February 2007, the school was redesignated a technology college specialising in design and technology, science and mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school is clear about its strengths and weaknesses and the leadership team is successfully targeting areas requiring improvement with much success. There have been some significant improvements in the provision for students' well-being since the last inspection. The standards reached by students are average and the progress they make through the school is satisfactory overall. The pockets of underachievement are being tackled effectively in Years 10 and 11 and the rising trend in results looks set now to improve more rapidly. This is the result of higher expectations, more challenging targets and improved attendance. In the effective sixth form, students achieve well and are motivated and ambitious for themselves.

Following several years when the trend in test and examination results at GCSE was gently rising, in 2008 results dipped and a number of students underachieved. Results in mathematics were not as good as in some other subjects at GCSE and there were variations between departments at the higher grades. This is being tackled successfully through better use of performance data to gear work to individual students' needs. In Key Stage 3, the improved focus on basic literacy and numeracy and higher expectations of the more able are improving students' progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. Lessons are successful in engaging students in learning and their behaviour is managed well. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Some teachers are highly skilled practitioners and students make considerable progress in their lessons. However, there are a minority of lessons where the work set is ill matched to students' different abilities, and strategies for consolidating the learning are not applied well.

The curriculum is good and has many strong features. Specialist status has had a positive impact on students' access to the curriculum, particularly through providing for information and communication technology (ICT). Extra-curricular activities are numerous and well supported. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included and this contributes to their good progress. Students at Key Stage 4 have good access to courses that are well matched to their needs and interests.

Students speak positively of the ethos of the school as one which is caring and where everyone gets on well with each other. Inspectors found behaviour to be consistently good. A small minority of parents have concerns over students' behaviour in and out of school, and the school has still to systematically build confidence in the school amongst the parental community. Most students enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. A number of new strategies and approaches have successfully involved parents in a rapid reduction in persistent absence and exclusions. Good personal development is encouraged by the good quality of care, guidance and support. Staff work hard to meet students' often complex needs. Academic support and guidance are developing well, although the quality varies across the school.

Given a clear lead by the headteacher, managers at all levels are responding positively and the capacity to sustain improvement is good. However, some leaders and managers across the school are not yet using progress data sufficiently well to assess the impact of initiatives to strengthen teaching and learning, and so ensure their effectiveness.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enter the sixth form with well below average attainment. They achieve well and reach average standards by the end of Year 13 because their needs are identified accurately and they receive effective support from their teachers and mentors. Strong leadership combined with good teaching has led to rising standards and achievement. Excellent data management gives teachers a good understanding of students' progress and as a result, intervention measures are effective. Personal and social education lessons focus well on the skills needed to prepare the students for life after school and in further education. Students feel happy and secure in this safe environment, and many opt to enrol into the sixth form for personal development reasons. They enjoy sixth form life and play an active part in the school and local community. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the students. Good links with local colleges allow a wide range of vocational courses, although the uptake of some courses is too low to make them viable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by developing more strategies in the classroom, for meeting the needs of the different ability groups and to help them consolidate their learning.
- Improve the use of progress data to focus the work of subject leaders on improving the quality of lessons.

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' performances at GCSE over the last three years have remained average. The percentage of students gaining five or more A*-C grades including English and mathematics is average. There are however variation in performance between subjects and the proportions of students gaining A*-B grades, including in specialist subjects, are below average. This is also reflected in some underachievement by a small minority of students of average ability who do not meet their expected targets. Determined intervention for those students identified as falling behind is proving effective in tackling these issues and current Year 11 students are on track to perform considerably better this year. The upward trend is most marked in mathematics. Achievements within the group of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, reflecting the good quality of support these students receive.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were broadly average over the last three years, although there was some underachievement amongst Year 9 students in 2008, particularly in mathematics. But improvements are evident at this key stage too, and students are set to achieve some challenging targets, particularly for the more able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good relationships flourish throughout and reflect the inclusive and reflective nature of the school. Students' improved enthusiasm for school is evident in good rates of participation in contributing to the school and wider community through sporting and cultural activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students have a good sense of right and wrong and an understanding of different cultures, but this does not always extend to multicultural Britain. Students are encouraged to think about others and they fundraise extensively for charitable causes. Sixth formers are particularly good role models in this respect, initiating and organising fundraising activities, organising local events and the school prom. Students' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle is good and students use information from the school health centre to inform their choices on a day-to-day basis. Student surveys indicate that students feel safe, and that they have confidence that any bullying will be dealt with effectively. In particular, Year 7 felt the separate play area set up for them has helped them settle in quickly. The school council make a valuable contribution to the life of the school, most recently in helping the school develop a clear strategy for rewarding all students fairly. While students develop satisfactory basic skills in literacy and numeracy, their good independent and collaborative skills, combined with effective links with other training providers, ensure good support for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is improving as the school puts in place strategies to ensure more consistency, and best practice is shared between departments. In the most effective lessons, students are challenged by tasks which meet their individual needs and a brisk pace of learning keeps students on their toes. Increasingly, challenging targets are being set. This is raising the game for everyone and students are relishing the opportunities to excel. Many lessons involve a range of interesting tasks and activities which both enthuse and motivate students. As a result, learning in most lessons is both purposeful and meaningful. Some outstanding practice was observed. In a Year 9 science lesson, the teacher's confident approach, quickfire questioning and careful management of the learning encouraged students to think quickly and search for answers independently of the teacher. Less effective teaching offers students fewer opportunities to reflect on their learning or to think more deeply. Where teaching assistants are used, all students feel included, supported and confident to achieve. However, a minority of lessons do not match work adequately to different abilities, resulting in more able students not being sufficiently challenged and some lower attaining students unable to access the work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has evolved to meet the school's aim to create multi-skilled people to cope with future economic opportunities. New courses have been introduced and more are planned to diversify provision further, especially for the 14 to 19-year-olds. Cross-curricular themes and collaborative working extend the opportunities for students to develop self-confidence and the skills needed in life. Spiritual and cultural education is covered adequately in personal, social and health education lessons. Good links with the local community are built through a

wide range of activities including music, drama and sport. Sport is popular and several students have attained national success. Enrichment activities contribute well to students' self-confidence and well-being. Wide-ranging opportunities for students to participate in trips and activities develop their understanding of both local and global communities well, although the curriculum does not systematically extend students' knowledge and understanding of other cultures within modern Britain. Gaps in students' reading, writing and numeracy skills are identified early, and are tackled through an effective, well planned intervention strategy. The links with primary schools are good and provide early support for building students' literacy and design and technology skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

- Good arrangements for the care, guidance and support of all students are threaded through all aspects of the school's work. Arrangements for the safeguarding and safety of all students are robust and policies are regularly reviewed to meet best practice. Good procedures support students' attendance and ensure this is given a high priority. The school's effective practice in developing partnerships to encourage good attendance has had an impressive impact. There are improving systems to support learning to ensure students understand what they need to do to improve. Students are aware of their learning levels in subjects but this is not consistent across the school. The oral feedback by staff to students and marking is at times good but this is inconsistent and students are not always clear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has an inclusive vision for the school and for the wider local community. His leadership is complemented by a restructured senior management team, and they work cohesively together. The school's leaders are effective in promoting the personal development and well-being of all students, through varied opportunities, experiences and support. The school is mindful of the well-being of staff, resulting in high levels of morale. It takes increasing account of the views of students and is in touch with parents and responds to their concerns, although a significant minority of parents feel that this is an area for improvement. Middle managers have a better understanding of their role in raising standards through their involvement in evaluating teaching and learning. They are setting a clear direction for improvements in their areas of responsibility. Useful systems are now in place to track students' progress and increasingly effective use of performance data is being made by some departments to set targets and match these to current achievements. It is too early to see the full impact of these measures, although there is already some good evidence of impact seen in module scores in Year 11. However, the school rightly recognises that there is a need to use the data to drive further improvements in teaching and learning. The school has worked with a wide range of agencies and partners to provide better provision for students, for example local training providers, the excellence cluster and particularly feeder primary schools. Governors are very committed and knowledgeable, challenge appropriately and play an active role in the school.

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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?	3	3
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	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	
The extent to which 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	3	
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 learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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 school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Redruth a Technology College, Redruth TR15 1TA

- We very much enjoyed meeting you on our visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming. Your school offers you a satisfactory education and has made some impressive improvements recently. These are the main findings of our report.
- Your attendance rates have improved significantly and are now above average.
- Your behaviour in lessons and in school is good and has also improved since we last visited. Some parents are not convinced and it is down to you, with your teachers' help, to show greater respect for each other and school rules when you are arriving and leaving school.
- Some other aspects of your good personal development are commendable, including your involvement in the local community, development of workplace skills and understanding of healthy lifestyles. Sixth formers are good role models.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving all the time.
- The school takes good care of you, ensuring you feel safe and well looked after.
- The headteacher and all the teachers are working successfully to make your school even better.
- Most of you make satisfactory progress, but teachers need to match the work better to your abilities and encourage you to reflect on your learning in lessons.
- Managers at all levels need to further develop the skills necessary to check how well things are going and manage changes to improve the proportion of good and better lessons even further.

You can certainly help the teachers with some of these things. Thank you once again for your help during our visit and good luck with your work in the future!

Yours faithfully

Jonathan Palk Her Majesty's Inspector