

# Queen Elizabeth's Community College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113498
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	325828
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Simms

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

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	
<b>Social care URN</b>	
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Jennifer Reed

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<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 (total)	1600
Sixth form	367
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Brenton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Newton-Chance
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Western Road Crediton EX17 3LU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01363 773401

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 March 2009
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**Fax number**

01363 777859

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

The education inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following:

- standards and achievement in mathematics and technology
- the impact of the college's behaviour policy
- the personal mentoring systems
- whether quality of provision and standards in the sixth form are outstanding.

The three-day social care inspection of boarding provision by two inspectors took place during the week of the education inspection, with liaison between the two teams.

Inspectors gathered evidence from discussions with staff, students and governors. A range of documentation was examined and first-hand evidence was gathered from observing students in lessons and around the college. Parents' views were gathered from questionnaires completed prior to the inspection. Other aspects of the school's education work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This large community college was designated as a High Performing Specialist School in 2005. Its first specialism is in technology and the second specialism in humanities was awarded in 2006. It is also designated as a specialist training school. There are currently 44 students boarding, several of whom are from overseas. The college offers a range of extended services including family and adult learning programmes. The specialist resource unit, originally for 28 students with statements for dyslexia, is being phased out by the local authority and the few remaining older students are now fully integrated into mainstream classes. The college holds many awards including Effective Partnerships with Parents, Sportsmark, Artsmark and Investors in People. It is located on two main sites in different areas of Crediton. Years 7 and 8 are on one site, with Years 9 to 13 and the boarding houses on the other, with additional playing fields located elsewhere.

## 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 school. It has outstanding features which include the provision and outcomes for students in the sixth form and for those with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SpLD) throughout the college.

Standards on entry are average, though the proportion of students with LDD has increased recently. Students achieve well to Year 11, with standards significantly above average by the time they are 16. In 2008, results in GCSE mathematics were of concern, and the proportion of students reaching five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics dipped as a consequence. This contrasted with overall A\* to C grades, which were above average. Investigations show that the anomalous reasons for this dip are resolved, so students are now achieving as expected or better in mathematics and they achieve exceptionally well in English. These strengths, together with good skills in information and communications technology (ICT), prepare students well for future education and working life. Standards and achievement in aspects of technology such as textiles and food technology are good, and in graphics they have improved since 2008.

Personal development is good, including students' understanding of the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions of their lives. They experience a well-planned curriculum which includes an effective 'skills for success' programme. There is also an exceptional range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities which is commended by parents and students alike. Behaviour is good, with most students responding positively to high staff expectations and the demands of the 'behaviour for learning' policy. They know how to stay safe, fit and healthy. Though attendance remains average, college staff do all they reasonably can to improve students' overall attendance. Students enjoy coming to college, feeling confident that any bullying 'gets immediately sorted out', in the words of some. They respond exceptionally well to the many opportunities to contribute to their immediate and wider communities, many of which relate to the college's various specialist subjects. In addition to these, excellent work through the Community Action Service, for instance, has led to students running highly successful art workshops for older people. An extensive range of international links with schools in the Middle East and Tanzania extends students' understanding of global issues well. Good environmental awareness resulted from a successful Year 7 humanities project, including a 'Make a Difference' day. This has influenced and changed students' attitudes towards procedures such as the college's own recycling policy. These, and many other examples, demonstrate the college's good contributions to community cohesion.

Good teaching and learning contribute strongly to students' achievement and enjoyment. The college's focus on 'assessment for learning' is becoming successful in providing students with more effective academic guidance, particularly in their examination years. This informs older students about how to improve, but senior staff recognise that such feedback is not consistent across the college. Although good examples exist, teachers' marking does not always clarify the next steps students must take to improve, especially those in Key Stage 3. Outstanding pastoral and personal care, such as the support for vulnerable students, contributes to their good achievement. The college now identifies carefully other groups such as middle attaining girls, or those claiming free school meals, to ensure they get the support needed to achieve as they should. Students value greatly the helpful one-to-one relationships with their personal mentors, who provide them with a constant source of support and advice as they move through

the school. The consistency with which staff provide this personal mentoring and support has improved since the previous inspection.

Good leadership, governance and management are founded on an incisive analysis of performance and provide clear direction for all the college's work. Overall improvements since the last inspection, including those identified in the last report, have been good. Governors challenge and support the college well and contribute to excellent self-evaluation. This ensures good planning for the college's future. Impressive improvement in the sixth form testifies to the resulting success in raising achievement, and is a measure of the college's good capacity to improve further. Future targets are challenging and though the college fell a little short of targets for Year 9 in 2008, it exceeded those for Year 11 and for the sixth form, the latter by a considerable margin. Staff and students manage the difficulties of cramped, often dilapidated, split-site accommodation well to overcome the existing constraints. Nonetheless, the many critical parental comments about the state of the buildings reinforce the view that accommodation remains an issue, diminishing, as some remarked, any pride students might develop in their working environment. The vast majority of parents comment very positively on the college's provision, though a number criticise the inconsistency of homework and/or its marking. The college is deeply committed to including all students equally in all its activities and to providing an increasingly high quality of education for all.

The college met or exceeded its specialist targets in 2008 in all but technology, where disappointing graphics results accounted for the shortfall. The college uses its two specialist status subject links highly effectively, for instance through excellent partnerships with local schools and institutions further afield. An example of this is where students have provided valuable ICT installation and teaching support work in a young offenders' unit, demonstrating mutually useful learning relationships. Innovative humanities projects such as one seen in a sixth form lesson during the inspection show students working highly effectively on a 'real' environmental protection research project about the local coastline.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding sixth form, as the college itself claims. Significant improvements in students' examination results show achievements greatly exceeding expectations based on their prior attainment, and standards are high. Numbers in the sixth form have grown significantly, as has the extensive range of academic and vocational courses on offer. Students greatly appreciate this and the impressive variety of activity opportunities at home and abroad, which extend their horizons and their personal development outstandingly well. They speak very articulately about the positive impact of all their experiences and about their extensive contributions to school and community life.

The vast majority of students progress into higher education. Retention levels are high and almost all succeed in accessing their first choice of university from Year 13. Students themselves are exceptionally positive about the quality of the education they receive, valuing in particular their excellent teaching and 'brilliant' relationships with their teachers and personal mentors. All are outstandingly well guided and supported through their sixth form experience, knowing exactly how well they are progressing and what to do next to improve. They value the vigilance with which staff ensure that they are on track, and equally, the measures taken to support and challenge them if they are not. Key to this success is the arrangement of assigning mentors from students' own subject areas. This leads to an excellent balance of academic and personal guidance, often conducted via frequent emails. All students' needs are regarded as individual,

but students themselves particularly commend the successful support provided for those who have LDD. Students develop excellent levels of independence in learning, greatly assisted by good access to ICT. Excellent leadership and management of sixth form provision have led to significant improvements since the last inspection, with difficulties such as cramped accommodation, a key area which students and their parents feel should be improved, managed very effectively, so that any adverse impact on learning is minimised.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of boarding at Queen Elizabeth's is good. Most of the National Minimum Standards are met, with some exceeded. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The school's effective management structure ensures good communication and collaborative working practices between the boarding and teaching staff, contributing to promoting boarders' welfare and keeping them safe. Strong leadership within boarding is underpinned by comprehensive policies and procedures, providing staff with clear guidance to help them look after boarders well.

The school has appropriately addressed 14 of the 15 recommendations made in the previous report to improve the standard of care practices within boarding provision. Action taken includes: the development of new policies, guidance and records; writing to parents in their own language to gain accurate medical information about boarders' health needs; providing healthy snacks; improving fire safety measures; monitoring the quality of risk assessment; improvements to premises and formalising the 'on call' arrangements for overnight support to staff and boarders. The recommendation to record the outcomes of complaints made within boarding has not been satisfactorily completed, adversely impacting on the evaluation of the responses made.

The boarding provision's key worker system and the school's good pastoral care contribute to identifying and addressing each boarder's personal support needs and promoting their health and well-being. Effective links established between boarding and teaching staff, school nurses and counsellors help to ensure that boarders' physical and emotional needs are addressed. Boarders are registered with the local surgery and receive good health information and advice. The school seeks parental consent for medical treatment and first aid and provides a checklist for parents to complete, to identify suitable 'household' medicines to be given to relieve minor ailments. However, there is no written protocol on the provision of non-prescription medicines. Records evidenced two minor shortfalls in the administration of medication.

There are plenty of opportunities for boarders to take part in physical exercise. The school has been awarded the 'Devon Healthy School Award' and boarders benefit from the provision of nutritious and healthy meals, including a daily vegetarian option. The school is consulting with boarders to identify their individual tastes and preferences to improve menu planning and increase satisfaction.

Boarders feel safe living in boarding provision; staff demonstrate a sound understanding of safeguarding issues. The school has a designated safeguarding coordinator and works with local networks to help keep pupils safe. Risk assessments are completed for identified hazards and activities, and to safeguard individual boarders. They provide an excellent level of evaluation, clearly identifying the measures to be taken to minimise any potential risk of harm. Boarders are protected from fire safety hazards. The school has well-defined recruitment and selection procedures to vet all staff working with boarders to ensure their suitability. However, it is not

routine practice to make direct contact with each referee to verify the reference, nor to make a written record of explanations for any gaps in applicant's employment history.

Bullying is not a problem in boarding. Staff take appropriate action to limit the risk of bullying and promptly deal with any arising issues. The school's ethos successfully supports an international boarding environment, wherein boarders are encouraged to respect and value diversity and live harmoniously together in an integrated and supportive school community. Relationships between boarders and staff are generally very positive; boarders are happy and enjoy living at the school. The school's behaviour strategy and the boarding handbook provide pupils with a clear understanding of expected standards of behaviour, consequences, sanctions and rewards. Sanctions given are appropriate to the misdemeanour.

The 'ombudsman' visits the boarding houses on a fortnightly basis, providing boarders with an independent person to talk privately with about issues of their choice. Regular house meetings, the boarding council and daily conversations with staff ensure boarders' views are heard and their opinions taken into account in the operation of boarding provision. Boarders can contact their family and friends in private. New boarders are given excellent support to settle into boarding life.

The overall standard of boarding accommodation is satisfactory. The girls' boarding accommodation provides a good standard of accommodation; girls are very satisfied with their bedrooms and facilities. Boarders have sufficient privacy in boarding; the accommodation is secure from public intrusion. The boys' main house requires some maintenance work. Within shared bathrooms with no fixed soap dispensers, the provision of soap is not assured.

Staffing levels in boarding are sufficient to meet the needs of boarders; however, resources are stretched when boarders are unwell. New staff complete an induction programme which includes child protection training. Staff undertake regular first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding training and study for relevant child care awards. The experienced, cohesive, mixed-gender staff team delivers a good standard of care and supervision to boarders. Regular monitoring of boarding care practices contributes to ensuring boarders' welfare is promoted and safeguarded.

#### Recommendations

- Secure and follow qualified medical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines to boarders [National Minimum Standard 15.9]
- Ensure that written records of all medication administered are regularly monitored by an appropriate designated senior member of staff [National Minimum Standard 15.12]
- Keep a written record of complaints and their outcomes, for regular review by the headteacher or a senior member of staff [National Minimum Standard 5.5]
- Ensure the school's system for recruiting staff who will work with boarders includes all of the points within this standard before appointment, which can be verified from recruitment records [National Minimum Standard 38.2]
- Ensure boarding houses, in particular the boys' boarding house, is adequately ventilated and maintained [National Minimum Standard 40.1]
- Ensure washbasins are provided with soap [National Minimum Standard 44.4]

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

- Provide a consistently high quality of feedback to students, particularly those at Key Stage 3, to guide them about how to improve their work.
- Improve accommodation for education and for boarding.



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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?	2	1
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 effectiveness of boarding provision	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	1
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	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	2	

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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**

05 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Community College, Crediton EX17 3LU

Although we did not get a chance to see many of you individually, I am writing to thank you for making us welcome into your school when we came for the inspection and to tell you what we found out.

In such a short, one-day inspection, we were mainly checking to see whether the managers' own judgements about the college are right, and we found that they are. We agree with them and with most of your parents who feel that Queen Elizabeth's is a good school which looks after you well. We found that there are some outstanding things about it, including, as the college judges for itself, provision and achievement in the sixth form. We also found that the progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good indeed. By the time you are 16, overall standards are above average. You enjoy very good relationships with your personal mentors, valuing the advice they provide. This was one of the things we looked at in detail and found that this individual mentoring is very helpful. Good teaching and learning across an interesting curriculum, with an extensive, exciting extra-curricular range, all ensure that you enjoy your education.

We looked at other specific things such as the reasons why some students did less well than expected in mathematics GCSE last year. We found that the school has analysed this very well and that it appears to be a 'one-off'. We also looked at some areas of technology where students did less well and found that these have improved. Students are now achieving as well as they should be or better in mathematics and technology, and you mostly do very well indeed in English. We looked at behaviour and whether the 'behaviour for learning' policy is successful; it is mainly, so your behaviour and general personal development are good.

The principal and senior leaders manage the school well and have identified the things needed to improve things further. We have agreed that they will make sure that all the feedback you receive about how to improve is of good quality so that you all know exactly what to do to make your work better. We think you all cope well with accommodation difficulties but we have asked managers to do everything possible to improve the college buildings. Your parents mentioned this a lot in their comments to us.

Yours faithfully

Janet Simms

Lead inspector