

Holsworthy Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113511
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325831
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Looney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	710
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Young
Headteacher	David Fitzsimmons
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Victoria Hill Holsworthy EX22 6JD
Telephone number	01409 253430
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Holsworthy Community College is a smaller than average secondary school which serves a rurally isolated area of north-west Devon. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the percentage from minority ethnic groups or who have English as an additional language. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen over the last three years and is now slightly above the national average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the average. The college gained specialist school status in technology in 2006, has the Sportsmark silver award and has recently been recommended for the Basic Skills Agency Secondary School Quality Mark

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holsworthy Community College is a good school. There have been significant improvements made to all aspects of the college's life since the last inspection. Under the good leadership of the principal and his senior leadership team, the college has grasped the nettle of underachievement, particularly in English and mathematics, and has focused the work of the college on raising standards. The restructuring of responsibilities at senior and middle leadership levels, and better professional development, have ensured that leaders at all levels now have a clearer understanding of their accountability for improving student outcomes. The use of data analysis to identify underachievement has been used particularly well to support the college's impressive range of intervention strategies. The extra intervention support given to students to help them improve their literacy, and to a lesser extent their numeracy, has been well planned, delivered and managed; regular monitoring has shown a rising trend in standards and improved student achievement. Students are very aware of the effort the college makes. As one student remarked, 'They take interest, believe in you, and put the effort in on your behalf.' Parents, too, take a keen interest in their children's education as the well above average response to the inspection questionnaire testifies. Students enter the college with broadly average test results but with literacy and numeracy skills which are below average, consistently so for boys. By 2007, standards, as measured by the percentage of students attaining Level 5 or above, had risen to above average in mathematics and science and significantly above average in English. The progress students make over Years 7 to 9 is good. The college rightly describes the upward trend in standards attained by the end of Year 11 as 'impressive' and celebrates students' good progress. The college has been particularly successful in increasing the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. Up to 2007, this had been at the expense of higher attaining students whose progress was not as marked as that of their peers. The unvalidated national test data of 2008 suggest that the college is now starting to increase the percentage of students gaining the highest grades in some subjects. The college has met challenging targets over the last two years and its own tracking of the progress of current students and the proven accuracy of their predictions indicate that challenging targets will continue to be met. Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students are polite, articulate and welcoming to visitors. Behaviour is good and students say they enjoy their time at the college. This enjoyment is certainly reflected in their good attendance. Students' support of each other is epitomised by the guided reading programme, which sees committed and well-trained older students working assiduously with younger ones. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but their understanding of cultures other than their own is relatively underdeveloped. The care, guidance and support students receive are good. Students and staff enjoy good relationships and students' pastoral needs are well met. The college is using data effectively to set targets and the vast majority of students know exactly how well they are doing. Teachers mark work regularly but not all of them are using feedback and marking consistently well to ensure that students know exactly what they need to do to improve. In some lessons observed, however, guidance on how to improve was a real strength. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the college. The appropriate use of subject-specific language in lessons reflects the impact that the development of literacy has had on the curriculum. The curriculum itself is good. It is broad and balanced at Key Stage 3 and well matched to individual needs at Key Stage 4. The college has worked hard to extend choice for older students, many of whom now enjoy vocational courses. The curriculum has benefited as a result of the college's specialisms,

particularly in the improvements in learning opportunities brought about by increased access to information technology. Good links with external agencies and other providers enhance the curriculum and the support students receive. The performance of the college is carefully monitored. The quality of teaching is monitored as part of the performance management process and the senior leaders are aware of the range of quality in the teaching. Teaching observations, however, are most effective when they are regular and based on a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning and how these might be improved. This is not yet a consistent approach across the college. The principal leads the self-evaluation of the college's work well and improvement planning at college level is precise and well prioritised and indicates a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in all subjects for higher attaining students.
- Develop students' understanding of cultures other than their own.
- Ensure that the existing good practice in assessment is shared so that all teachers are guiding students well on how to improve.
- Develop the monitoring of teaching so that it is ongoing and based on a shared understanding of how teaching and learning might be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The progress students make over their time in the college is good, as is their progress in lessons. The college's own analysis of students' lower than average literacy skills on entry leads to a range of targeted intervention. There is the discrete 'focus group' in Year 7 for students with learning difficulties who are finding transition difficult, as well as opportunities for other students to follow programmes to improve their reading and spelling. This has resulted in a rise in the percentage of students attaining Level 5 in English, mathematics and science and in students making good progress in 2007. The progress students make at Key Stage 4 has also improved significantly in the last three years. Standards as measured by the percentage of students attaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE has risen by 18%, to 76%. GCSE results in both mathematics and English have improved considerably since the last inspection and unvalidated data for 2008 show a big rise over the previous year in the percentage of those students attaining A* to C in mathematics. These data also show that higher attaining students achieved well in English, science, art, design and technology, and humanities. Students also perform well in the specialist subjects of science, design and technology, and information and communication technology (ICT) as well as in art and business studies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are aware of healthy lifestyles, eat well and exercise regularly. They say that they feel safe and that incidents of bullying are rare and swiftly dealt with. They value the provision of peer mentors who help resolve issues between students. Students enjoy coming to the college and attend well. Students value their teachers. As one student said, 'Education-wise, it's tops.' Students make positive contributions to their college community and act through the college year councils to improve their lives at the college. They are particularly proud of the student planner they have designed. They also actively engage with the local community groups such

as the Army Cadets. Students are developing good workplace skills, making good use of developing ICT skills, work experience placements and business experience days.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and make good use of skilled teaching assistants. Good progress occurs when lessons are brisk in pace, make use of challenging questions, have tight time-related tasks and provide opportunities for students to assess their own learning. Students say that they enjoy lessons that promote active participation and which support them to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching assistants play a strong role in supporting students' progress. They work collaboratively with the teachers and departments to plan appropriate interventions. In a few lessons, teaching does not involve students actively enough and tasks are not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining students. As a result, in these lessons, some students work at a slower pace, become distracted and lose their focus.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is good provision in Key Stage 4 for students to follow vocational and academic routes towards examination in Year 11. The range of subjects available to students is broad with very good opportunities for work-related and enterprise activities. The vocational pathway does not yet extend to students of all abilities. The college provides for all statutory elements of the curriculum, although dance is not offered to all students to examination level and the percentage of students taking a modern language is relatively low, even though the teaching is supported through exchange trips. Provision for gifted and talented students has developed well and the college is already seeing improved outcomes. Higher attaining students, for example, are given opportunities to take part in science and technology challenges, organised with the region's universities. Many well-attended clubs and activities enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college cares for its students well. All necessary safeguarding requirements are in place and regularly reviewed. College policies on health and safety are carefully adhered to. The college has worked hard to maintain the level of good attendance it now enjoys. Additional academic or pastoral support for students who need it is carefully tailored to their needs. The college works closely with a number of outside agencies to ensure students progress and achieve. Target setting and the monitoring of students' progress across subjects has enabled the college to identify students who may be failing to achieve. In such cases, individual mentoring and small group working allows students to catch up. The college, supported by the Connexions service, helps students to make decisions when faced with post-16 option choices and few are not in education, training or employment when they leave the college.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the principal is good. He has identified clearly the key focuses for improvement and is supported by a good and developing senior leadership team. The governing body is well informed and uses that information well to make decisions and support the work of the college. Although improvement planning at college level is sharply focused, departmental evaluation forms have an inconsistent focus on the impact of their work on student outcomes. The college's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The college has targeted resources where they will have most impact on students' achievement and the funding dedicated to the training and deployment of higher level teaching assistants has been beneficial to teachers and students. The college thus provides good value for money. The college has made good use of external support from the local authority to support its own programme of continuing professional development. There has been a good focus on the development of middle leaders in the last three years and teaching staff commented positively upon 'the shifting culture within the college and access to good "learning focused" professional development'.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

7 November 2008 Dear Students Inspection of Holsworthy Community College, EX22 6JD As you know, four inspectors recently visited your school. I am writing to tell you what we found. Thank you very much for talking to us so willingly, for being so polite and for making us feel so welcome. We believe that Holsworthy Community College is a good school. We think that the college has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve the standards of your work, particularly in English and maths. As a result of the extra classes and support the college has given you, you now make good progress. You told us that you valued the efforts of the staff in your college and enjoy your education. The senior leaders and subject leaders now make much better use of the information they have on how well you are progressing and set you challenging targets which they regularly check on. Nearly all of you know how well you are doing in all your subjects. Not all teachers, however, tell you exactly what you need to do to improve, although some teachers do it very well. We think that you are developing well as young people who value their education, understand the importance of staying healthy and safe, and who willingly help others. We were particularly impressed by the way the older students helped younger ones with their reading. We thought that your understanding of communities other than the ones in the area in which you live was not as well developed as we would have hoped. We have asked the college to ensure that all of you know how to improve your work and to provide more opportunities for you to understand about the wider world. We have also asked teachers to really stretch the most able students so that they make better progress. Finally, we have asked the leaders at the college to spend more time looking at teaching and working out how teaching and learning might be improved. You can help by continuing to respond well and work hard. With best wishes Anne Looney HMI Lead inspector