

The Sholing Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116451
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	326398
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	David Butler 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)	988
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Kimpton
Headteacher	Miss K Dagwell
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Middle Road Sholing Southampton SO19 8PH
Telephone number	02380 448861
Fax number	02380 422998

Age group	11–16
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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

The Sholing Technology College was a girls' school until September 2008 when it admitted its first cohort of boys to Year 7, following the re-organisation of schools in the local area. About 94% of students are of white British heritage. Around one third of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including statements of special educational needs; a substantial increase since the last inspection. There are 10 students who are in local authority care. The college has had specialist technology status since 2002.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Sholing Technology College is a good and improving school. It has several outstanding features and no major weaknesses. Since the last inspection, better teaching and learning have brought about improvements in standards and achievement, attendance has risen, the curriculum has been enriched and the college has very successfully integrated its first intake of boys. The college has continued to improve because of its strong leadership and management and the high level of commitment shown by staff. Its sustained record of success demonstrates it has good capacity to bring about further improvement.

The college provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its students and is highly successful in meeting their individual needs. These qualities are reflected in the overwhelmingly positive comments and responses received from parents about the work of the school. Parents of one child wrote 'we appealed for our disabled daughter to attend TSTC because we felt this would be the best solution for her and the school's commitment to inclusion has fully justified our expectations'. Students are immensely proud of their college, they enjoy their education and achieve well. They make good progress during their time in college and attain results at the end of Year 11 that are above national averages. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students in local authority care achieve well. Almost all students attain five or more passes in GCSE and equivalent examinations.

The college has worked hard to improve the level of student engagement and challenge in lessons, which was an area for development identified in the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good but there was some variation in the lessons observed. Several lessons were outstanding but in a minority students made no more than satisfactory progress, often because teachers had not identified precisely enough what students were meant to be learning and insufficient attention was given to assessing students' levels of understanding.

Students' personal development is very good. Attendance is above average and behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Students are very caring towards each other and sensitive to individual differences and needs. Students' involvement and contribution to the college and the wider community, for example through charity work, is outstanding. The college prepares students very well for further education, training or employment through a strong programme of work-related and enterprise education. The college has done a great deal to help raise students' educational aspirations and this is reflected in the very high proportion continuing to further education and the increasing numbers eventually going on to university.

Leaders and managers provide clear direction and have introduced some innovative initiatives. However, their monitoring and evaluation of these and other aspects of the college's work, are not always sufficiently rigorous in judging the impact they are having on raising standards. A major strength in the college is the excellent partnerships it has established with parents, other schools, further and higher education providers, businesses and external agencies to support students' learning and personal development. The college has made good use of its specialist status in technology to enrich the curriculum, improve resources and provide students with opportunities to engage with businesses, all of which have helped to raise achievement and aspirations. The college manages its resources efficiently and effectively and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of learning by extending the opportunities for teachers to share the exemplary practice that already exists in the college.
- Improve the rigour of evaluation procedures across all aspects of the college's work to raise achievement and standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the college is slightly above average. They make good progress during their time in college and achieve well by the end of Year 11. The standards attained in GCSE and equivalent examinations have been rising steadily in recent years and are above average. Unconfirmed data for 2008 show that almost all students attained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to G and just over half attained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Standards and achievement are excellent in English but average in mathematics. The college has recently taken steps to improve performance in mathematics and the evidence from the inspection indicates that these are already starting to prove effective. The college is making good progress towards meeting its targets, including those for its specialism. There is no evidence of significant underachievement by any particular group of students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted and this is reflected in the respect they show for each other and their enthusiastic commitment to charity work and the excellent links the college has with the local community and schools in other countries. Students mix well and support each other, for example through peer mentoring. Cultural diversity is celebrated and valued and students are well prepared for living in a multi-cultural society. Students feel very safe in college and incidents of bullying, racism and other forms of harassment are rare and dealt with promptly and effectively when they do occur. Students have ample opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example, through the prefect system, running clubs and societies and organising social events. The 'College Board', which is the students' representative body, manages its own budget and has brought about improvements to the college environment. Students are involved in key decisions, including the appointment of staff, but are not represented on the governing body. Students have an excellent understanding of what constitutes safe practice in college and in their personal lives. They know how to lead healthy lives and many attend extra-curricular sporting and other fitness related sessions. The canteen offers healthy food options but a significant minority of students, particularly those bringing packed lunches, chooses not to eat healthily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is reflected in lessons through the clear explanations they provide of ideas and concepts. Relationships in the classroom are very good and students generally respond well to the tasks they are set, although in a few lessons students

were too passive and given too few opportunities to challenge ideas and present their own thoughts. Lessons are generally well structured and normally include a range of interesting tasks. However, in a small minority of lessons, what students were expected to achieve was not identified precisely enough and consequently there was insufficient evaluation of the progress they had made. Some outstanding classroom practice was observed and this is worthy of sharing more widely between teachers. Students experiencing difficulties or wanting extra help find teachers approachable and very willing to make extra time available to help them. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given excellent support, enabling them to make very good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The college has continued to develop its curriculum since the last inspection to meet the full range of needs of its students. This has contributed to rising levels of attendance and improving examination results. The range of vocational courses has been increased and there are opportunities for higher attaining students to take some GCSEs early and to take GCE AS courses. Good links with colleges of further education, with higher education institutions and local businesses have helped to extend and enrich the curriculum. Students value the 'extended opportunities days' which enable them to focus on subjects or engage in activities that support their personal development. They also value the excellent range of extra-curricular activities available to them. The college is at an early stage of implementing the new secondary curriculum in Year 7 but it does have plans in place to address this. Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) are good but ICT is not fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the college enables students to make good progress in their learning and personal development and to feel secure. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given excellent support from college staff and external agencies. Procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of students are excellent. Students are given very comprehensive advice in choosing their options and with making decisions about post-16 opportunities. The great majority of students who left the college in the summer of 2008 entered further education and all of the remainder went on to training or employment. The monitoring of students' progress by senior managers is exceptionally detailed and thorough and they make effective interventions when there is evidence of students underachieving. Parents and carers are kept extremely well informed and are closely involved in reviewing progress and setting targets for achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the college with clear vision and purpose. She is very well supported by an experienced and very effective senior leadership team and by the governors. Curriculum leaders are equally focused on raising standards and are held accountable for performance in their subject area. They contribute effectively to college planning and development. Managers have a good understanding of the main strengths and areas for development in the college

and have robust plans to bring about further improvement. There are excellent procedures for the collection and analysis of assessment data and effective use is made of this to set students appropriately challenging targets. However, procedures for evaluating the impact of the college's work on students' achievement are not always sufficiently rigorous. For example, some lesson evaluations focus too much on the quality of teaching and not enough on what students are actually learning. The college makes an effective contribution to promoting community cohesion through its very strong commitment to equal opportunities, the excellent partnerships it has developed with parents and its engagement with the local community.

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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?	1
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	1
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	1
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?	1

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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
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**

07 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Sholing Technology College, Southampton, SO19 8PH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with the recent inspection of your college. I would like to share some of our findings with you. We think you are right to be very proud of your college and what it is achieving. It provides a good standard of education and excellent care, guidance and support. It has no major weaknesses. The great majority of you feel safe, enjoy your education and attend well. We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around the college. You support each other very well and are sensitive to individual needs and differences. You make good progress and achieve well because you have good attitudes to learning and because teaching is good. You understand how to lead healthy and safe lives. You are making an excellent contribution to life in your college and the wider community, for example through the prefect system, peer mentoring and your work in raising very substantial sums for charity. Your College Board is doing a good job in representing your views and helping to bring about improvements to facilities in the college. Those of you who are older are well prepared for going on to further education, training and employment. Your headteacher provides very effective leadership and management and she is well supported by staff and governors. Your college has developed excellent partnerships with your parents, carers, other schools and local businesses. Staff are fully committed to doing their best for all of you and meeting your individual needs.

We have suggested two improvements to help make the college even better.

- We observed some outstanding lessons and we feel it would help make teaching and learning even better if opportunities to share this excellent practice between teachers were extended further.
- To raise your achievement and standards further we feel the college needs to be better at finding out what the impact of its work is.

We feel that the college is very capable of implementing these and other improvements. I hope you will play your part in this and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Butler

Her Majesty's Inspector