

Fullhurst Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120298
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	327250
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	880
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Scott
Headteacher	Michael McPherson
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
School address	Imperial Avenue Leicester LE3 1AH
Telephone number	01162 824326
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Fullhurst Community College is broadly similar in size to other secondary schools. The college serves an area of high social and economic deprivation and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Nearly a quarter of the students are from minority ethnic groups and over half of these have English as an additional language. The college has the Healthy School award, Careers Quality Mark and Investors in People status. There has been a high level of staff turnover in recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this college requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading and managing the college are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the college.

In November 2007, inspectors judged that the college required significant improvement so it was given a Notice to Improve. The college was given a very clear steer about what must be improved. The leadership was asked to improve students' progress, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the quality of teaching and learning. The pace of change since then has been far too slow, and improvement has been unsatisfactory. This resulted in the local authority replacing the governing body with an Interim Executive Board in July 2008. Although a trend of improvement across the school is evident in English, this is not mirrored in mathematics and science, where standards are still too low because of important weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Consequently, the standards achieved in each key stage are inadequate. The college is a friendly and caring place. Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most enjoy college life but the overall rate of attendance is inadequate. Despite some recent improvements, a significant minority of students are persistently absent, including a high number on courses outside of the college. This hinders their learning. Students' behaviour is satisfactory overall but when lessons enthuse them, it is good. Students have a satisfactory understanding about keeping healthy and safe. The low standards students reach by the end of Year 11, mean that they are not being prepared well enough for their future pathways. Inadequate academic guidance and lack of robust use of assessment have allowed too many to underachieve, particularly the boys.

The college has experienced various staffing difficulties, which are beyond its control, but weaknesses in the quality of teaching go deeper than this. Significant efforts by the leadership team to foster good teaching have had too little impact. The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Teaching is inadequate overall because there is not enough good teaching to ensure that students make sufficient progress. Too often, lessons are dull, expectations are low and teachers fail to motivate and engage students, and move learning on at a good pace. However, some good and high quality teaching in several subjects allows the students to demonstrate their true capabilities.

The curriculum is satisfactory and planned to provide flexible pathways and groupings to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individual learners. It is organised to build on students' low literacy skills on entry to Key Stage 3, although outcomes do not yet reflect the input of these initiatives. Developments in Key Stage 4 have been positive, with increased vocational options leading to stronger engagement of students.

Leadership and management are inadequate. The college's track record has not demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve fast enough especially given the present uncertainties regarding the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team. The middle leaders are not yet sufficiently involved in decision making nor are they fully accountable for the inadequate standards achieved or for the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. The leadership team has carried out rigorous audits of each subject which reveal inconsistent progress and teaching within and across different subjects. The college's self-evaluation satisfactorily

demonstrates that the leadership team knows its strengths and areas for further development. Although the college now has a sound grasp of achievement data, strategic planning and management, it has not ensured that intentions are translated swiftly and consistently into actions by teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate students' progress, especially that of boys, and particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by: ? quickly eradicating inadequate teaching and tackling weaknesses in teaching so that students are consistently challenged ? making better use of assessment information to ensure that work is matched to students' capabilities ? improving the quality of academic guidance given to students.
- Improve leadership and management by: ? urgently confirming the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders ? improving the coordination and evaluation of activities so standards rise, teaching improves and key initiatives are fully embedded ? ensuring middle leaders are appropriately involved in the decision-making process and are held to account for the standards achieved and quality of provision in their area of responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate. Attainment on entry at the start of Year 7 is generally below average but can often be lower. National test results at the end of Year 9 confirm that standards in English have improved to below average, but this is not reflected in mathematics and science, where they remain well below average. The 2008 unvalidated Key Stage 4 test results confirm that standards overall are very low despite a small increase to 21% of students gaining the equivalent of at least five GCSEs A* to C, including English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving the equivalent of five GCSEs at A* to G, and those who gain at least one qualification, has continued to rise but is still below that seen nationally.

There is a trend of improvement in English standards, but this is not mirrored in mathematics and science, where standards are still too low at the end of both key stages. This is because of weaknesses in teaching and leadership in these subjects. The college has attempted to raise standards since the previous inspection with only limited success. Leaders are yet to deal effectively with the underachievement of many boys in mathematics and science, especially at Key Stage 4.

The achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory because support is matched appropriately to their needs. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds also make satisfactory progress. However, the needs of students with English as an additional language are not always effectively met by class teachers, who lack the knowledge, skills and understanding to best meet the students' specific linguistic needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most students enjoy college life and the majority have positive attitudes to learning. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and sometimes good. In some lessons, mainly where teaching lacks challenge and teachers' behaviour

management is not good enough, some students become disruptive and this hinders others' learning. Parents and students both say that some teachers do not deal quickly enough with inappropriate behaviour and that a minority of students give the college a bad reputation. Inspectors agree. The number of fixed-term exclusions is increasing and is too high despite some recent improvements.

Students' contribution to the college and wider community is adequate. For example, they raise funds for various charities and the college council has helped design the new school uniform. Students' attendance is below average and too inconsistent. For example, since September 2008, Year 7 attendance has been good but it has been inadequate in Year 11. A significant minority are persistently absent and their poor attendance is slowing their progress. Punctuality at the start of the day is not good enough.

Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are satisfactory. Assemblies on topics such as HIV/AIDS help develop further the students' understanding of sex, relationships and moral education. However, there are too few opportunities for reflection in assembly, tutorial and lesson time. The development of the students' economic well-being is inadequate. Appropriate careers guidance helps most students choose courses that match their needs and aspirations. However, too many students leave the college with weak basic skills and this means that they are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. There are significant weaknesses in teachers' planning, which does not meet the wide range of students' needs, and teacher expectations are low. Lessons frequently fail to take sufficient account of students' different starting points and capabilities, and much of the work is pitched at the same level of difficulty. Teaching methods often do not fully engage or actively involve students, which leads to them being inattentive or too passive in their learning. Not all teachers are successful in managing the poor behaviour of the minority of students who disrupt learning. Where teaching is good, as seen in a minority of subjects, for example, in information and communication technology (ICT), it is characterised by a lively atmosphere, fast pace, interesting activities and careful checking of students' learning as the lesson progresses. Not all teachers adopt these positive strategies, resulting in student disengagement. Although there is now an agreed approach to lesson planning this is not consistently used. Students know and understand the level at which they are working and their targets. However, most are unclear about what they need to do to improve. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Where good marking exists, it is characterised by considerable detail and guidance as to what the students need to do to improve their work further. However, too frequently, marking is only superficial in nature, with too much work left unmarked. This gives little guidance to students and undervalues their efforts.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a satisfactory range of courses and subjects. There is an awareness that more needs to be done to promote students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Recent changes to the curriculum, particularly the introduction

of numerous vocational courses, have not had sufficient time to become fully embedded. The needs of the students are being met in Key Stage 3 with the introduction of a competency and skills-based curriculum to improve their basic skills in Year 7. Some students in Year 9 have started a Level 1 vocational course, which they will continue into Key Stage 4. There are appropriate plans to increase the range of courses next year, including more vocational options and an alternative curriculum for the most vulnerable students. The personal, social, health and careers curriculum is appropriate, as is the use of external agencies. The range of extra-curricular activities allows some students to access enrichment activities. Students particularly enjoy participating in the arts and physical education activities offered to them. All students take GCSE in French at the end of Year 9.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are inadequate overall. Staff take satisfactory care of students on a day-to-day basis, and most students say they feel safe and are free from harassment or racism. Many students are underachieving because the academic support and guidance they receive is not good enough. Marking is inconsistent and insufficient attention is being paid to remedy the weaknesses in students' writing and presentational skills. The number of students who are at the early stage of acquiring English is small but increasing. When students are withdrawn for individual or group work, the provision suitably meets their linguistic needs. However, their specific learning needs are not always being effectively met in mainstream lessons. Procedures to reduce persistent absence are not fully effective. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Appropriate checks are made on staff to confirm their suitability to work with young people. Child protection arrangements are secure, and staff have been appropriately trained to fulfil their duties. Comprehensive risk assessments have been carried out for trips overseas.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. There is a strong collective commitment to do the best for students under some challenging conditions. There have been a number of substantial changes to the leadership structure and its personnel, as well as 26% staff turnover within the college in the last two years, which have hindered the college from moving forward at a faster rate. This has meant that the college has not been able to maintain the momentum and ensure consistency and coherence in the work it has been doing. The significant building programme, lack of facilities and use of temporary mobile classrooms have also meant that students have not always had an environment conducive to working.

The college's collective leadership and management are having too little impact on raising achievement and standards at a sufficiently speedy rate. Despite some energetic and worthwhile activity over the last twelve months, progress in improving the quality of education in the core subjects at Key Stage 4 is inadequate. The local authority has provided considerable support to the college, but this has been largely ineffective. This is due largely to the lack of clarity relating to the future direction and leadership of the college causing some considerable confusion and uncertainty amongst staff, students and parents. As a result, staff morale is low.

The college's contribution to community cohesion is inadequate. The college lacks a clear understanding of its duties and is not fully engaged with the local communities surrounding

the college. It has not analysed its contribution nor has it a strategy for contributing effectively in the future. The recent introduction of the range of appropriate actions, such as a more systematic tracking of students' progress and more frequent monitoring, is timely.

Self-evaluation is detailed and reasonably accurate. Curriculum leaders evaluate the work in their departments in an open and constructive way, although there is some inconsistency in their effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation systems are in place, including rigorous analysis of attendance, attainment and progress towards targets. However, the conscientious efforts of leaders, managers and staff since the previous inspection have not substantially improved the performance of the college and key issues have not been effectively addressed. The management of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

The Interim Executive Board is aware of the challenges faced by the college and the urgent need to raise standards. It is clear about what the college needs to do to move forward. It is also clear about ensuring that there is greater level of coordination of the support received by the college from the local authority at all levels.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

5 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Fullhurst Community College, Imperial Avenue, Leicester LE3 1AH

Thank you for welcoming us to your college when we visited you recently. We spoke with many of you and appreciated the friendly and open way you told us about your college and your work.

We appreciated the way some of you helped us to find our way around the college, and how many of you showed us your books and told us how you are getting on with your work and what you enjoy about the college. We think your college looks after you well and makes sure you are safe, particularly with all the building work going on around your college. We can see why you are looking forward to moving into your new building. A number of you enjoy attending the extra-curricular activities the college offers, particularly the residential trips which help you to develop new interests.

Many of you who regularly attend said that you enjoy college. While your teachers do a lot to make sure that you are happy and safe, there are some important things that we have asked Mr McPherson, Mrs Hislop and your teachers to do better. In order for this to happen, your college will receive some extra help and visits from other inspectors, who will check how well the college is doing to make things better for you all.

We have asked your college to make the roles of senior leaders clear so that each person knows who is responsible for what, in order that they help raise standards and accelerate the progress that you are making, particularly in mathematics and science. We have also asked the college to improve the teaching by planning lessons that match your needs, to challenge you more and give you the guidance that will help to improve your work.

You can help by regularly attending college and being on time, trying your hardest in lessons and asking your teachers for help when you do not understand anything. You can also help by taking greater responsibility for your behaviour when moving around the college.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif Her Majesty's Inspector