

The Robert Manning Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120631
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327328
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Lindsay Hebditch 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)	1148
Sixth form	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Moore
Headteacher	Mr Laurence Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
School address	Edinburgh Crescent Bourne PE10 9DT
Telephone number	01778 422365
Fax number	01778 393879

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Introduction

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

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and also investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being and the quality of provision (particularly for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities). Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records. Other evidence included completed parental questionnaires, the scrutiny of curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school's work and interviews with staff and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school'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

The Robert Manning Technology College is above average size and serves the small market town of Bourne. It operates within Lincolnshire's selective system of education and most higher attaining students attend the local grammar school. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is low. Most students are of White British origin and very few speak English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and increasing. There are more boys than girls on roll, but the reverse is true in the sixth form. The college has been a specialist Technology College since 1999 and was awarded an applied learning specialism in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Robert Manning Technology College is a good and improving school with outstanding features in its specialist areas of technology and applied learning. Parents and students are strongly supportive of the school. One parent summed up the views of many by commenting that: 'It is a large school, but it feels like a small one because teachers know the students so well and there is always somebody to help.' The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision of how to improve the school still further. He shares this ambition with a talented senior leadership team and supportive governors who challenge effectively.

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with broadly average standards, although there are relatively few students who have high levels of prior attainment. Students make good progress overall, but a significant minority do not make sufficient progress in English. Students make excellent progress in Key Stage 3 but progress is slower in Key Stage 4. The proportion of students who achieve five or more GCSE grades A* to C is above the national figure, but slightly below it when mathematics and English are included. In recent years the progress made by students who find learning difficult has been satisfactory but recent changes to the arrangements for literacy and numeracy support have led to improvement, so that these students now make progress which is comparable to that made by others.

Personal development and well-being are good. The vast majority of students enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their consistently good attendance. The school is a safe, calm and well-ordered place. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Incidents of bullying are rare and, when they do occur, are dealt with swiftly and robustly. Students make a good contribution to the community at school, and at local and national levels. Spiritual, cultural, moral and social development is good and there are excellent opportunities to develop economic understanding through enterprise activities and vocational experience. The school has introduced a range of initiatives to help students adopt healthy lifestyles. It has been successful in encouraging more students to participate in extra-curricular sports, but knows that some students could choose healthier options at lunchtime.

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as good. The rigorous quality assurance procedures, developed through the school's applied learning specialism, underpin this judgement and evidence from this inspection confirms its accuracy. The most successful lessons capture the imagination of students and inspire them to do their best, but this practice is not consistent. Sometimes students are not provided with sufficient opportunities to take control of their own learning. This deprives them of valuable opportunities to think for themselves and develop their use of English and, as a result, they do not make the progress they are capable of making. Teachers' assessment is accurate but the rigour of marking varies between subjects, particularly in the attention given to grammar and spelling.

The curriculum in the main school is outstanding. The school's successful development of learning pathways in Key Stage 4 has been extended to Key Stage 3, enabling students to undertake a programme of learning which is designed to meet their particular needs. Within these pathways students are provided with a very good range of options, with a particularly broad choice of subjects within the school's technology specialism. The development of vocational learning is a particular strength of the school and has enabled it to take a leading role in the development of specialist diplomas in south Lincolnshire. The school has recently revised its curriculum to provide a more coherent literacy support programme for students who

find learning difficult. Although it is too early to assess its full impact, there has already been an improvement in the progress made by the students who participate in it. The school offers a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support are good. All students, including the very vulnerable, are looked after well. Procedures for safeguarding are comprehensive. Teaching assistants work hard to support students who need their help in the classroom, but they are not always deployed effectively enough to maximise the benefit of their high level of commitment. Students receive very good advice on career choices and progression.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has a clear vision of how to take the school forward and has not been afraid to take difficult decisions when they are in the best interests of the students. The quality of subject management is generally good. Those managers who require support in their roles receive it and improve. Careful and co-ordinated planning is a strength of the school and has resulted in a broad range of well-considered initiatives designed to make improvements in important aspects of the school's work, including achievement, teaching and learning and the monitoring and evaluation of progress. Considering the recent development of these plans, the school has made excellent progress with their implementation. This, together with the school's meticulous approach to self-assessment and quality review, gives the school excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth formers are thoughtful, caring and set a positive example to the rest of the school. Students make good progress in most subjects and standards are improving. Teaching is good, although classes often have small numbers, restricting the opportunities for students to discuss work with their peers. The curriculum is good; the school is working with other post-16 providers in the region to further extend the range of courses it offers. Students are well equipped by their time in the sixth form to make a smooth and successful transition into employment or higher education. Leadership and management are good, but sixth form accommodation does not provide students with sufficient suitable study space or access to computers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards in English throughout the school.
- Deploy teaching assistants more effectively.
- Provide better study space for sixth formers.

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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	2
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	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?	2	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
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

16 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Robert Manning Technology College, Bourne, Lincolnshire, PE10 9DT

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your college. We enjoyed talking to you and have made sure that we have reflected your views in this inspection report. You clearly enjoy coming to college and appreciate how well you are being prepared for your future lives. Lots of your parents took the trouble to complete the questionnaires we sent out and I would be grateful if you could pass on our thanks to them for replying.

We think that The Robert Manning Technology College is a good place to learn. It is improving and has outstanding features in its specialist areas of technology and applied learning.

Your headteacher is keen to make the school even better. We identified three things that we think would help:

- Improve achievement and standards in English throughout the school.
- Make better use of teaching assistants in lessons.
- Provide better study space for sixth formers.

You can do your part by continuing to work hard and behave well. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Well done!

Lindsay Hebditch

Her Majesty's Inspector