

Monks' Dyke Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120713
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327351
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1122
Sixth form	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Fletcher
Headteacher	Dr Chris Rolph
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 January 2006
School address	Monks' Dyke Road Louth Lincolnshire LN11 9AW
Telephone number	01507 606349
Fax number	01507 600856
Email address	admin@monksdyke.lincs.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 40 lessons, and held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, the chair of governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including: improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of progress, records of classroom observations, attendance and exclusion, minutes of governors' meetings and 158 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively teaching engages and challenges all students and helps them to learn, particularly boys, and the promotion of literacy skills
- how well progress is assessed, checked and tracked to enable students to achieve challenging targets
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in judging and improving the quality of lessons
- actions taken by the college to promote good attendance, and to tackle persistent absence.

Information about the school

Monks' Dyke attracts students from the town of Louth and surrounding villages. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds although a range of other minority ethnic groups is represented. Very few students are at an early stage in learning English. Academic selection means that although overall attainment on entry to the college is broadly average, there are fewer students of high ability. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of students with a statement of special education needs is above average. The overall number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average.

The college was designated as a specialist technology college in 1995. It gained Training School status in 2006, and a second Applied Learning specialism in 2007. It holds a number of awards including Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools, Sportsmark and Investors in People.

In September 2008, the headteacher became the executive headteacher of a secondary school within the local authority. A head of school was appointed at Monks' Dyke.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Since the last inspection Monks' Dyke has strengthened its profile in the local and wider community through effective partnership working. The executive headteacher identified the need to broaden curriculum opportunities for young people in the area and has forged effective links with local schools, business and other education institutions to secure a new vocational centre in the town. In addition leaders have extended the range of courses in the college. This can be seen most strongly in the sixth form where students are enthusiastic about their courses, and benefit from good teaching and excellent relationships.

Leaders recognise that although there have been improvements in provision arising from collaborative working; some aspects of the college's work have not received the attention required. In 2008, students in Year 11 did not reach standards expected especially in English and mathematics. This meant that 36% of students achieved five or more A* to C grade passes including English and mathematics compared to 46% in 2007. Boys did significantly less well than girls that year. The college did not meet the statutory and specialist targets set and this can be explained by weaknesses in the monitoring and analysis of progress. Although assessment information was collected it was not analysed sharply enough to identify students and groups of learners falling behind. Leaders have learned the lessons of this dip in performance and assessment and tracking systems have been revised. There is a strong focus on current Year 11 to identify students at risk of not achieving their targets. A variety of effective intervention strategies are in place to support the completion of coursework, revision skills, alongside closer monitoring and mentoring of a target group of learners. Current records indicate that the college is on track to improve results this year.

Monks' Dyke is a caring school and staff know the personal needs of students very well. Staff are successful in integrating students whose first language is not English. Relationships are generally positive which help to create a good climate for learning in the majority of lessons. Teaching assistants provide valuable support in lessons to help students in their learning. Students enjoy practical activities and opportunities to work with each other. They make at least satisfactory progress in lessons but there are not enough good or better lessons. In many lessons, teaching is not planned carefully enough on the assessment of students' needs in order to accelerate progress, particularly for boys. Learning objectives are routinely set but do not consistently offer challenge for students of different abilities. Opportunities are often

missed to develop literacy skills, and to deepen students' understanding through the use of probing questions to make them think, and reflect on their work. The use of assessment to check on students' learning is under developed in most lessons. The quality of marking and presentation is inconsistent.

Leaders collect evidence through a range of monitoring activities such as classroom observations and work scrutiny to support an evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. This provides a broadly accurate picture although findings are not always rigorously analysed to identify precisely where action is required, for example in tackling weaknesses in English or boys' achievement and attendance. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation at all levels to improve consistency, and to enable good practice to be shared. Actions taken to improve assessment and tracking systems, in response to the disappointing results in 2008 demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to improve. Leaders are aware of the need to embed quality assurance processes and to build capacity across middle leadership to ensure coherent and coordinated improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching across the college by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan lessons to take account of assessment information and the learning needs of students, particularly boys
 - involve students in regular assessment of their work in order that they understand their learning targets
 - use questioning to challenge all students to think more deeply about their learning
 - check students' understanding of their work frequently during lessons in order that plans can be adjusted to meet learning needs, and mark work regularly providing comments to guide students on how to improve
 - group students flexibly in the classroom in order to provide targeted support where necessary and to promote independent learning for confident learners.

- Achieve consistency and improvement across the college by strengthening monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders so that:
 - monitoring of teaching and learning leads to personalised professional development to enhance teaching skills
 - tracking and analysis of progress information is used by all staff to identify groups and individuals to support timely intervention, as required
 - strategies can be adjusted and developed to improve attendance, and reduce absence of the identified target group
 - high quality presentation and marking of students' work can be reinforced and consolidated across the curriculum
 - literacy skills can be tracked and developed.

- Develop students' English and literacy skills throughout the college by:
 - routinely incorporating speaking, listening, reading and writing opportunities into lessons
 - ensuring that literacy skills are assessed and developed in all subject areas
 - exploring with boys' the approaches which support the improvement of their skills
 - incorporating learning and discussion activities to engage all learners.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

Evidence from students' work seen during the inspection demonstrates that the majority of classes are making at least satisfactory progress during the current year. Students are attentive and want to make progress. They enjoy most lessons and demonstrate good behaviour. There is a positive atmosphere in most classrooms and this supports students' learning. Additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they make progress in line with other students in their classes. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds make equally satisfactory progress. The college provides good support for students with English as an additional language and subsequently they make good progress in the acquisition of language skills.

By the end of Year 9 standards are slightly below average in English, mathematics and science. The college faces a challenge of improving the writing skills of students across the college, especially boys. Weaker literacy skills impacted on boys standards in 2008 with 28% gaining five or more A*-C grades including English and mathematics compared to 44% of girls.

Other key features of student outcomes:

- Students show a good understanding of how to keep safe. Students say any instances of bullying are dealt with appropriately by senior leaders although responses are not consistent across all staff. Parents also express concerns about consistency in this area.
- Behaviour observed during the inspection was satisfactory; movement around the college was orderly and considerate. Comments from students and parents express concern about the behaviour of a small minority of students, and the college is taking action to tackle this.
- The emphasis on health education and participation in sport and extra-curricular activities means that students have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles.
- Opportunities are available for students to take on responsibilities such as council representatives and to make decisions. The council is keen to make a stronger contribution to the college's development. Involvement in charity and fund raising events demonstrate a concern for others.
- Although attendance is broadly average there is a high proportion of persistent absentees. Successful action has been taken to tackle this. Attendance data is

now analysed more effectively. Regular attendance is increasingly celebrated and rewarded.

- Students are prepared adequately for the world of work. The college is rightly focusing on improvements in English and mathematics to extend opportunities and choices at ages 16 and 18.
- Students participate in a variety of artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities to develop their appreciation and awareness. They show interest in the views and beliefs of others. Although new this year the vertical grouping arrangement is strengthening relationships across year groups. Planned opportunities to develop the spiritual awareness are more limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	3
How well do pupils behave?	3
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3

The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and show confidence in their specialist subject. Good teaching was observed in around a third of lessons during the inspection. In these lessons teachers motivate learners and accelerate their progress by sharing and discussing learning outcomes, and providing interesting and exciting tasks to allow students to learn through practical and varied activities.

Programmes of work do not fully take into account the different learning needs of students. There has been no planning regarding the best ways to accelerate the progress of boys. Questioning of students is not always challenging enough and they are not given enough opportunities to talk about their learning. This means that many students are over dependent on the teacher and can become passive learners. Marking is not always regular, or diagnostic and does not always show the next steps for the students.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The college is developing an increasing range of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 that are starting to meet needs and abilities more effectively. Not enough attention is given to the promotion of literacy skills across the curriculum. Specialist technology status is making a satisfactory contribution to students' learning and progress. Benefits are seen in the additional resources provided. New specialist facilities are effectively raising the status of media and the creative arts. Educational visits as far afield as Mexico and to the former concentration camps in Poland, in addition to involvement in World Challenge and Duke of Edinburgh extend students' experiences.

Very good arrangements are in place to support a smooth transition from a range of primary schools. Students speak highly of the guidance they receive about course choices, and the care and support available to help them achieve.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	3
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have demonstrated considerable drive and vision in working with external partners to secure provision which provides a stronger match to students' interests and aspirations. Leaders are now turning their attention to ensure that monitoring systems are sufficiently robust and consistent to bring improvement. The college has a wide range of improvement plans although these are not sharply focused with measurable outcomes on which to assess progress. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the college's progress are not sufficiently detailed with timelines to enable improvements to be carefully tracked and plans adjusted if necessary to maintain the pace of change. All safeguarding regulations are met. Systems to monitor, evaluate and record the effectiveness of the range of safeguarding policies are developing.

The college has a strong commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities for all. Leaders are now beginning to collect and analyse information about groups of learners more carefully to enable action to be targeted to tackle any differences in outcomes such as the attainment of boys.

Leaders have taken effective steps to analyse the college and local community to identify where developments are needed to promote community cohesion. Initiative at a local level is demonstrated through effective partnerships. Plans are in place to extend opportunities for learners to have greater contact with others from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds to broaden their horizons.

Governors support the college well and gather views informally from students, parents and staff through consultation events. They receive regular updates from

college leaders but are not directly involved in gathering first hand evidence to contribute directly to self evaluation. Progress reports on improvement plans and against targets are not sufficiently detailed to enable governors to identify clearly enough where attention is needed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	3
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students are very positive about the care and support they receive in the sixth form to enable them to be successful learners. The curriculum has been transformed in recent years to enable students to study appropriate qualifications and to learn in different ways in partnerships with local colleges and schools. Students are highly motivated in lessons, enjoy a variety of teaching styles and display the skills required for independent learning. Teachers track progress accurately and students are well informed about their progress and what they need to do to improve their grades.

Standards have varied in recent years but current assessments show that students are on track to attain broadly average standards in 2009. This represents good progress from students' below average starting points. To some extent students' progress is restricted by the relatively low level of literacy skills they bring to the sixth form.

Students make a positive contribution to the college and their community. Many are proud of the opportunities they have to mentor and support younger students.

Leadership and management in the sixth form are effective. This is illustrated by their work in promoting partnership, successful bids to deliver diplomas in information and communication technology, and creative and media, and the quality of guidance and teaching students' receive.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
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The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parental questionnaires indicated general support for the college. A number made positive references to the quality of transition support from primary to secondary school. About half of the responses indicate a concern about aspects of the college's work. The main anxiety was about unacceptable behaviour and the consistency with which it is dealt. This was not an issue during the inspection but it is evident that a small minority of students do not meet the college's expectations. Inspectors agree with parents who comment about inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning across the college. Some parents felt that they were not kept informed about progress, or how to support learning at home. Some indicated that the college did not take account of their views and suggestions. Leaders and governors acknowledge that there is more to be done to involve parents more actively in supporting learning and college improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Monks' Dyke Technology College Louth LN11 9AW

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your college recently. We enjoyed our discussions, and seeing you at work. Monks' Dyke is a caring school and staff know you very well. You told us that you appreciate the care and support you receive. Relationships are generally very positive in lessons and around the college although a small minority of students do not always take responsibility for their behaviour. The college is aware that this is a concern for some students and parents, and is taking steps to tackle this.

College leaders have worked very closely with external partners in recent years to increase the number of courses available for older learners. Many of you told us how much you enjoyed these new courses and the different ways of learning. This was especially strong in the sixth form which we judged as good. The college provides a satisfactory standard of education in Years 7 to 11. In 2008, examination performance in Key Stage 4 was disappointing for the college. Girls did much better than boys in their GCSEs. Staff believe that you can all make better progress, and reach higher standards, and inspectors agree.

We decided that your college needs to improve certain things in order to be even more successful:

- to increase the number of good lessons that are planned carefully to meet your needs so that you can make faster progress
- for all senior leaders and heads of departments to check the quality of lessons, the progress you are making, and that you are attending regularly
- to improve your English and literacy skills to help you to be more prepared for life and choices in the future.

Some parents would like to be more involved in supporting your learning and improvements in the college and we have suggested that leaders explore how this might be done. You can help the college to improve by attending every day; think more about what you are learning in lessons and what you need to do to improve.

Our best wishes for the future.

Nada Trikić
Her Majesty's Inspector

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