

# Brownhills Community Technology College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104248
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	336266
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Driscoll

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	681
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	75
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gary Wood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Keenan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Deakin Avenue Walsall WS8 7QG
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## Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of four additional inspectors, who observed 35 lessons and 28 teachers. Meetings were held with students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessments of students' attainment and progress, results of the school's own checks on the quality of teaching and documents relating to planning for the school's future. They also scrutinised the results of the 87 responses to the parental questionnaires, alongside responses to the students' and staff questionnaires

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

- the success of actions being taken to reduce exclusions
- how effectively teachers use assessment data to plan lessons that meet the needs of different groups of students
- how effectively senior leaders use such data to identify areas of strength and weakness in the school.

## Information about the school

The school serves an urban area in the north of Walsall. The number on roll has fallen significantly since the college was last inspected, and is now below average. Over the same period the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen and is now average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. Most students come from a White British background. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average.

The college was originally awarded specialist status for technology in 2002, and this was renewed in 2007. The college was granted trust status in January 2010.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

Brownhills Community Technology College has shown considerable improvement across almost all aspects of its work since it was last inspected, and now provides a good education. The outstanding work of the governing body in supporting the headteacher's unceasing drive to raise achievement has led to higher attainment, much-improved academic progress and better outcomes in almost all areas. Self-evaluation is accurate, and makes good use of the data from assessments to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in different subjects. The school's leaders have a good understanding of the main areas for improvement and how these are to be addressed. Most of all, a total lack of complacency helps to ensure that the school has good capacity to continue its improvement.

The school's specialist status has been a catalyst for improvement. However, weaknesses in leadership and management in technology have led to provision becoming less effective and teachers of design and technology are no longer receiving sufficient guidance on how they can improve their performance. The school's outstanding partnerships, many of which are forged through its trust status, are now being used to drive improvement in a highly cost-effective way.

Students now make good progress because the curriculum is better matched to their needs and teaching is more tightly focused on ensuring that progress is made in every lesson. Every parent or carer responding to the questionnaire felt that teaching is now good. Teachers now have a clear understanding of the ability of their students and plan lessons that take full account of this. Usually these plans are implemented well. However, in some cases the work is pitched at the middle-ability students in the class rather than being adapted for the higher- and lower-attainers, who make slower progress as a consequence. Behaviour is generally good in lessons, but is satisfactory overall because of the relatively high rate of fixed-term exclusions. The number of such exclusions has fallen dramatically this year, but the school does not have sufficient stages in its approach to managing behaviour within school before the need for formal exclusion arises. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average, because students find the courses they follow more meaningful and the lessons more enjoyable. The school's good work with parents of disaffected students has led to a dramatic fall in the number of students who are persistently absent.

Overall, this is a school that now works as a real community, with much more contented staff, students and parents who understand the part they can play in making the school even better.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce exclusions in the next academic year so they are below the national average, by providing more stages of support and intervention before the need for formal exclusion arises.
- Ensure all teachers use information from assessments to accurately match tasks to the ability of individual students
- Strengthen the leadership and management of technology in order to provide better support for teachers and re-establish the role of the specialism in driving improvement across the school

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Students join the school with attainment that is lower than average. Examination results in recent years have also been below average, but have been improving every year. The school's own assessments suggest that this trend has continued, and results this year will be average. This was confirmed by the inspection team's observation of lessons, where attainment was broadly average in Year 11 and in other year groups as well. The differences in progress between different groups have been largely eliminated. Learning was particularly good in the English, mathematics and science lessons observed, where students paid close attention to the guidance they were given on how to improve their work. In these lessons students knew exactly what they were going to be learning about and what they were to achieve by the end. In response, they carefully recorded their own assessments of how well they understood each aspect, and were quick to ask for help when it was needed. Some older students lacked self-confidence and were overly reliant on their teacher's encouragement to try something for themselves, but this was not the case for younger students, who are developing a much more active approach to their learning. Students worked well together in groups, demonstrating their good social development. In most lessons students worked hard and paid good attention to their teachers' instructions, although they did not always listen to their peers when they were addressing the whole class. Students said that they particularly liked art, music and drama, and this was evident in the lessons observed, where students were highly enthusiastic about taking part in practical activities and were able to demonstrate their good spiritual development.

Students play a good part in the school and local community. They visit and support younger children in primary schools, and are quick to take responsibility as form and sports representatives, as well as members of the influential school council. Participation rates in sport are high, and students demonstrate their good attitudes to healthy eating by many eating nutritionally well-balanced school lunches.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Good teaching is now common throughout most subjects, and the proportion of outstanding lessons is increasing. Some features of good teaching are consistent across the school. Students are always clear about what they are to learn, for example, because teachers explain the objectives for each lesson. Questioning is also good, so teachers quickly pick up on any students who do not understand. Sometimes teachers make important points that are missed by the students, because they are engrossed in their work. Teachers generally employ a range of different strategies that keep students interested, and frequently change activities in order to maintain a good pace of learning. The curriculum now provides a much better range of courses from which students can choose in Years 10 and 11. There are many more vocational options which are better suited to the needs of individual students, and these form a coherent route into the sixth form and beyond. Students may now sit their GCSE examinations earlier than usual. Many have already passed at higher grades. This has motivated students to improve them further in the June examinations. The range of courses has been extended by using the school's partnerships with local schools, colleges and employers, with a particularly wide range in the design and technology specialist area. Most subjects have developed a curriculum that builds progressively on what students have previously learnt, but in design and technology work is sometimes repeated because the gap between lessons is too great for students to remember what they learnt in the previous lesson. There are many extra clubs and activities, especially in sport and the performing arts, which have been carefully matched to the students' interests. Students and parents alike praise the quality of care and guidance provided by the

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school. All students spoken to were confident that they had someone to turn to when they needed help who would take their concerns seriously and provide them with the support they needed. Guidance for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is under new management. This has ensured that very effective systems are now in place, and all students now receive good support, which has eliminated the gaps in performance between students on different stages of support. Such students are being identified at an earlier stage in their education so they can be helped to make up ground more quickly.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

There have been improvements at all levels of management since the school was previously inspected, and staff morale is high. There is a strong drive for improvement from the headteacher and governors, well supported by a very able team of senior managers. Tough decisions have had to be made, but the headteacher has not flinched from taking them in the best interests of the students. Heads of department are now held accountable much more for the performances in their subjects, and they play a full part in monitoring teaching and learning. Data are used effectively to question why individual students have not done as well as they might have in each subject and class, and lessons are learnt for the future. Plans to improve teaching are detailed and actions have proved successful. Less emphasis has been placed on reducing exclusions and proposed actions focus on working with parents and carers rather than the students themselves, so progress in this area has been slower.

Governors have an exceptional range of expertise and experience, and the governing body includes representatives from the highest levels of management from partners in the trust. Their expertise, and that of their own institutions, has been used outstandingly well to provide, among others, training for teachers and managers, a wider range of courses for students and guaranteed places in higher education for students leaving the sixth form. Other partnerships include links with grammar schools that have raised boys' achievement, working with the community association which has enabled students to play a greater part in their own community, and many links with other agencies and groups that have improved students' understanding of drugs, health and safety. Some of these links have been used to enhance the school's good promotion of equality by helping all groups to play a full part in the life of the school. A special

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music club has reduced behaviour problems for one group of boys, for example, while arranging 'boxercise' courses has increased the number of girls actively involved in sport. Good attention is paid to all aspects of safeguarding. The school has a very good understanding of the needs of the different groups within its own community and further afield; it does a good job in promoting community cohesion, and evaluates the impact of related initiatives well. The school places a good emphasis on the teaching of respect for others. Some of these initiatives are effective, such as the joint choir with another school and the video link with a school in Uganda, but not all students are yet given the opportunity to engage with those from backgrounds different from their own. Nevertheless, plans are already in place to enhance provision through links with other schools.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Sixth form**

The same good improvement evident in the main school was observed in the sixth form. A completely new leadership team has taken over responsibility for managing the sixth form. The curriculum has been modified to provide more relevant courses, and the quality of guidance improved so that students are now studying subjects that are better matched to their needs and aspirations. They are now very positive about their experiences at school, and the numbers staying on to the sixth form and continuing into Year 13 are rapidly rising. Some classes remain very small, which stifles opportunities for discussion and raises questions about viability. There has been a renewed emphasis on improving teaching through using assessment data to match work to students' needs, and this has been very successful. After years of below-average examination



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results, attainment is now average. Teaching is now good and students are making good progress. Teachers plan lessons carefully, make learning objectives clear and usually maintain a brisk pace in class. They know their subjects well. Teachers do not always engage all learners actively in participating in or leading discussion when consolidating their understanding. Where students were full partners in learning with the teacher, the quality of learning and teaching observed was excellent.

Students receive helpful guidance with their work, and say they are confident to approach teachers if difficulties are encountered. Their progress is tracked closely. They know the target range they are working towards and the steps needed to reach the outcome they want. Students are pleased with the good guidance they receive when making applications to higher education. Few leave without an imminent prospect of education, employment or training. Students are interested in learning, enjoy lessons and attend regularly. Relationships among students and with teachers are very positive and constructive. Students make an excellent contribution to the school and local communities through the Leadership Academy, for example organising the Saturday performing arts club for the community, working with primary schools and supporting younger pupils in their own school.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are very positive about the education offered by the school, and the inspectors agree with their views. There was no pattern to the few negative comments received.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brownhills Community Technology College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 681 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	44	40	46	6	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	49	56	36	41	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	52	41	47	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	59	32	37	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	45	43	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	40	43	49	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	39	44	51	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	46	37	43	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	46	39	45	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	41	44	51	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	32	45	52	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	44	45	52	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	48	41	47	2	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Brownhills Community Technology College, Brownhills, WS8 7QG

Many thanks for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. We found that it has improved a great deal and is now providing you with a good education. You say that you now enjoy coming to school and that lessons are more interesting. We agree. You now come to school more frequently. The teaching is good, and the courses in both the main school and sixth form are much more suited to your needs and interests. You now make good progress

Your teachers usually take good account of what you already know and can do when setting your work. However, this is not always the case, so we have asked your headteacher to make sure that all teachers give you work that you find challenging, but achievable. Most of you behave well in lessons, but a number of you still have to be excluded because your behaviour is not good enough and the school will not allow lessons to be disrupted. We have asked your headteacher to give you more support within school before the need for a formal exclusion arises, but it does not need to get to this stage at all. You have the power to reduce the exclusions yourselves by always doing what you know is right, and not behaving in a way that only lets yourselves down. Most of you behave well in lessons and can help others by setting a good example

Your school has recently become a trust. This may not mean much to you, but it has had a huge impact on your education. The governors now represent some very valuable partners who have been helping the school to improve even more quickly, such as by training staff and giving you access to more courses. In previous years it has been the school's specialist status that has driven the improvement, but this is no longer the case. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that technology in the school is as strong as it was in the past. Nevertheless, your school continues to get better and better because it has a determined headteacher, staff who care about you and students who want to do well.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll

Lead inspector

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