

Pool Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112057
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337830
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Pauline Robins

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 of pupils on the school roll	844
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Moyle
Headteacher	Zelma Hill
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors carried out two 'learning walks' with senior leaders when they visited a number of lessons briefly to focus on specific inspection trails. The team observed 37 part-lessons, one assembly, eight tutorial periods and 39 teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work and looked at the college's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 345 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers and questionnaires completed by staff and a representative sample of students.

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

- how effective the college has been in raising the standard of teaching since the last inspection
- the effectiveness of the college's strategies to raise standards, especially in English and mathematics
- how effectively the provision meets the needs of all groups of students, including the most able, and ensures that outcomes are equitable for all
- the contribution of the business and enterprise specialism to college improvement.

Information about the school

Pool Business and Enterprise College is a smaller-than-average comprehensive college serving an area of high social and economic deprivation. The college has held specialist status for business and enterprise since 2004. Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The percentage of students known to be entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. However, the percentage who have a statement of special educational needs is substantially higher than the national average.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Pool Business and Enterprise College is an outstanding college, which truly reflects its values of high aspiration, total inclusion and respect for all. When asked what they would change about the college one student replied, 'Nothing, it's almost perfect.' There have been a range of significant improvements since the college was last inspected, most notably in the quality of teaching, which is now outstanding. The inspection team has every confidence that the college is not complacent and has outstanding capacity to improve further because:

- it is led by an inspirational headteacher who is supported by an exceptional team of senior managers, governors, staff and students who share her vision and commitment
- self-evaluation is embedded at every level and is based on secure data which results in accurate appraisal of provision, sets challenging targets and results in appropriate plans for future development
- the 'can do' culture spreads beyond the college and has a positive impact on the town and community of Pool and its environs
- students are known as individuals and challenged to give of their best; their successes are celebrated and their needs met through carefully targeted intervention and support
- as a relatively small establishment, the college recognises the need to work in partnership with other providers to deliver the best opportunities possible for its students.

The students are very proud of their college and spoke eloquently and with great respect and affection for their teachers, who they believe work very hard on their behalf. They said that 'it is like a big family' and that they are treated fairly; as a result they feel well cared for and extremely safe and secure. Their behaviour is outstanding and they are kind and courteous to each other. They have very positive attitudes towards their learning and are keen to embrace new challenges, cultures and experiences.

The flexible and innovative curriculum is currently good and is responsive to students needs. However, the college has already identified this as a priority area for further development and has appropriate plans in place to bring about the required improvements. Students make outstanding progress because the college rigorously assesses their performance and puts in place appropriate intervention programmes to support their learning. As a result, the number of students gaining good grades in GCSE has improved year on year since the last inspection and is above the national average. All other indicators reflect this pattern of an improving trend. The use of data and

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tracking to inform teachers' planning and intervention is robust throughout the college. Over the past year, the English department has worked hard to develop their system for marking and guiding students towards ways of improving their work and this is now exemplary. This has set a very high standard and one which the rest of the college is striving to emulate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The use of assessment data and the tracking of student progress are firmly embedded in teachers' classroom practice. However, to contribute to the continuing rise in standards, the college should ensure that in the time between assessed pieces of work, the process of feedback to students on what they need to do to improve should be consistently as informative and high quality as in the best departments.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The progress that students make has accelerated as a result of the robust systems for recording and tracking assessment, which are firmly embedded in teachers' classroom practice. The college consistently meets the needs of its students and therefore all groups of students make outstanding progress and enjoy their lessons.

GCSE results have improved over the last three years and the college's analysis of data for 2010 and 2011 confirms that this trend is set to continue. All groups of students are on track to achieve their challenging targets.

The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has been of concern to the college. However, improvements in the quality of teaching and sharply focused intervention strategies have impacted significantly and the policy of early entry for some students has already demonstrated a rise in standards.

The business and enterprise specialism makes an excellent contribution to students' achievement, development and enjoyment of college life. It engages students in learning and makes a significant contribution to them gaining the skills they require for future education, training and employment. Students' aspirations are constantly being challenged and raised. The concept of enterprise is present in all lessons and helps the students to personalise and question what they are achieving and how they are learning. Enterprise days, strong business, information, communication and technology teaching and excellent links to external providers and businesses also contribute to students' knowledge, understanding and future economic well-being.

Students have a very mature attitude to health issues and making healthy choices. They are well informed and the college has put in place some innovative and imaginative programmes to target those at highest risk of making unwise choices. Participation in sporting activities is extremely high and especially praiseworthy since it has been arrived at from a history of low involvement.

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Behaviour in lessons is a key factor in the students learning. They are attentive and excel in debate and group activities. Around the college, they are sensible despite some corridors and stairways that are too narrow. Newcomers to the college, both staff and students, commented about the friendliness and openness of the students.

From Year 7 onwards, students have an extremely wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility and contribute to the college and wider community. Just two examples include becoming a learning detective or cyber mentor. The college should be commended for the quality and extent of this work, much of which would not be found in the majority of schools. The contribution of the college and its students to the wider community is also unusual in the extent to which it has demonstrated impact on the town through regeneration and development projects. Attendance is above the national average and, since the last inspection, the college has significantly reduced the number of students who persistently fail to attend so that this figure is below the national average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

¹ 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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The college accurately evaluates the quality of teaching and learning. Improvements since the last inspection reflect the considerable work done by senior leaders to raise standards and skills and the commitment of staff to take their teaching 'from good to outstanding'. At their best, lessons have pace and challenge and tasks are accessible and engage students who in turn can articulate ideas fluently and with confidence.

Students know the levels at which they are working and their work is assessed regularly and systematically. There are frequent opportunities to learn from assessing themselves and each other when they demonstrate highly developed skills of giving and receiving positive criticism.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are well versed in what makes an outstanding lesson. This includes the deployment of highly skilled teaching assistants who support all students' individual needs and enable them to access the curriculum to great effect.

The curriculum is flexible and seeks to meet the needs of all students, especially at Key Stage 4. Here the curriculum is highly personalised and seeks to motivate students by raising their aspirations. There is an accelerated curriculum where early entry to GCSE and the opportunity to take AS level in some subjects recognise that as attainment rises, higher ability students need to be challenged.

The college is constantly seeking improvement and recognises the need for further innovative development at Key Stage 3, where plans are in place to introduce option choices a year early in Year 8. Intervention is a strong feature of the college's work and helps to support and develop students' levels of basic skills, though again this is 'work in progress' at Key Stage 3.

Students display very high levels of trust in the adults around them. Every student is known as an individual and the excellent links to external agencies complement a coherent, integrated approach to developing the whole person.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear and unwavering vision for the college which is shared, supported and implemented by staff, governors and students. Morale is high and there is an obvious sense of calm purposefulness. Teamwork and collegiality are evident throughout the college. Although this is an institution which thrives on innovation, it is

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also strongly self-evaluative and monitoring is very effective in holding people to account.

Governors are an integral part of the college development, are frequent visitors and have a well-informed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders to account when they need to but are also fulsome in their praise and have tackled some challenging external issues when required.

The procedures to ensure students safety are exemplary, records are meticulous and all current safeguarding requirements are met and in many instances exceeded. There is a total commitment to community cohesion and a rigorous analysis of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic context of the college catchment area has been carried out. The resulting action plan is inclusive of all groups of students and residents in the vicinity. It also engages the students in working with other schools, both nationally and internationally, in a way which has meaning and broadens their understanding of life beyond their immediate environment.

The college is a harmonious community in which a wide range of young people from various backgrounds get along extremely well together. Discrimination is not tolerated and is assiduously dealt with, and so rarely occurs. The promotion of equality and acknowledgement of diversity is evident throughout the work of the college and shines through in so many ways. Opportunities to access a range of alternative provision, the appointment of a coordinator for gifted and talented programmes, and the website which is accessible in a number of languages are just a very few examples of this outstanding work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires were received from a high proportion of the parents and carers of students at the college. The large majority agree that their children enjoy coming to college and the vast majority believe that their children are kept safe. A number of parents and carers commented that Pool is 'an excellent school ' we are very happy' and others that they are very happy with the confidence and self-belief that has been instilled in their children since starting at the school. A very small minority felt the college did not take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns and this related mainly to the way the college reported on students' progress, with comments that the system is too much about data. However, this was balanced by comments such as 'the school is welcoming and always happy to speak with parents about any matter at all'. Because the college is constantly striving for improvement, it has taken the more negative comments on board and recognises that it needs to persist in finding ways to communicate with all parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pool Business and Enterprise 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 345 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 844 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	28	205	59	33	10	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	123	36	213	62	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	113	33	203	59	24	7	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	101	29	207	60	26	8	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	94	27	227	66	10	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	21	211	61	41	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	17	225	65	43	12	2	1
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)	90	26	205	59	20	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	87	25	212	61	33	10	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	118	34	180	52	28	8	9	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	61	18	196	57	49	14	12	3
The school is led and managed effectively	108	31	207	60	16	5	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	116	34	197	57	21	6	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



14 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Pool Business and Enterprise College, Pool TR15 3PZ

On behalf of the inspection team, may I say what a pleasure it was to visit your college and we understand why you were so enthusiastic and enjoy being there. We think that Pool is an outstanding college and everyone has worked hard since the last inspection to make improvements. Your headteacher is amazing and, as both you and the staff told us, 'she knows everything that goes on'. She is ably supported by all the staff, governors and by yourselves. In fact, that was something that came through very strongly, the way you all work together.

You are extremely well cared for and that makes you feel safe. There is an exceptional range of opportunities for you to learn and improve your skills both academically and at a personal level through the leadership programmes, mentoring, etc. As you know, everything you do is carefully assessed and, when necessary, intervention programmes are put in place to help you. You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that business and enterprise status has brought as well as the impressive range of extra-curricular activities which enable you to live a very healthy life style. Your behaviour and attitudes to your learning are outstanding and you all made a very positive contribution to the inspection when we met with groups of you or individually around the corridors and in classrooms. We were impressed by the contribution you make to the life of your college but also to that of the wider community where the college has had such an impact in helping to make changes within the town.

The college already knows its strengths and, for areas that are not as strong, there are already plans in place to keep the college moving forward. The inspectors worked with your headteacher to decide on one area for development to help raise the quality of your work:

- in the time between assessed pieces of work, the process of feedback to students on what they need to do to improve should be consistently as informative and high quality as in the best departments.

With very best wishes for your future happiness and success

Yours sincerely

Pauline Robins

Her Majesty's Inspector

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