

Estover Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113543
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	338202
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1216
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlie Huitson
Principal	Graham Browne
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 41 lessons taught by 39 teachers and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of students. They observed the college's work, and looked at documentation including that relating to students' progress, strategic planning and curriculum provision. They analysed the responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 255 parents and carers.

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

- the impact of strategies to improve teaching and hence students' attainment and progress, especially in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 11
- the impact of improvements to the curriculum for lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11 on their attainment, progress and motivation
- the quality of guidance offered to students to support their choices of future education, training or employment pathways
- the quality of sixth form provision and its impact on students' achievement, and the impact of action taken to improve their progress in some Level 3 courses where progress is slower
- the quality of students' contribution to the community and of their understanding of the range of faiths and cultures present in British society.

Information about the school

The college serves an area of mixed private and social housing. Almost all students are of White British ethnicity. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. There is a wide range of needs including emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. The college receives additional resources for the education of 10 students with specific speech and language difficulties from across the local authority area. The college has been designated as a specialist visual arts college since 1999 and teaches art to foundation degree level.

The college is currently undergoing a total rebuild of its accommodation, due for completion in September 2012. From that time, the site will house a federation in which the college, a primary school, a school for students with severe learning difficulties and a children's centre will be managed by a single governing body.

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

The college provides good quality education for its students. In some respects, it is outstanding, due in large part to the very high quality of its staff. Under the effective leadership of the principal, an exceptionally strong team of senior and middle leaders has carried out a wide range of improvements which have had a positive impact on students' achievement, which is good among all groups of students. Outstanding features include the impact of the visual arts specialism on students' attainment and progress; the very high quality of care, guidance and support for all students, which has been enhanced by the reorganisation of tutorial systems into smaller 'schools'; the extent to which students understand matters of personal safety and the degree to which they rightly believe the college is a safe place; and their excellent contribution to the college and wider communities. The college also has excellent relationships with parents, carers and other partners and stakeholders, which is reflected in the high degree of confidence that they have in its provision. 'Staff go that extra mile to ensure that my son's experience of school is a positive one,' is a typical comment by a parent/carer.

From their below average starting points, students make good progress and attain broadly average standards at GCSE and in sixth form courses. However, lower standards in English, mathematics and science are a reflection of underachievement in these subjects in the recent past. The inspection gathered a wide range of evidence that teaching and students' progress in these and other subjects have undergone significant improvement, as a result of enthusiastic and able subject leadership. Rigorous analysis of data has been used to set demanding but achievable targets for individual students, staff and the college as a whole. Progress towards reaching these targets is regularly monitored, for example on student academic monitoring days, and adjustments are made as appropriate. College leaders understand that further work is necessary to ensure that all students, including the more able, reach their full potential in mathematics. In part, this is due to the relatively low aspirations of some students which the college is trying hard to address. Inspectors heard comments such as 'I'm not good enough to be'..' from a number of students. Most teaching of these subjects is at least good, but some remains satisfactory. Effective changes have been made to the curriculum to ensure that students, especially those of lower attainment, can experience a greater degree of motivation and success, and this is reflected in attainment that is above that reached by similar students nationally. Under the very effective leadership of the inclusion leader, the college ensures that all students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and that students at risk of disaffection are provided with a curriculum and teaching methods that meet their needs. As a result of

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these and other strategies, levels of exclusion are low and attendance is rising, so that it is now above average.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and have taken effective action to address the latter. Outstanding teaching such as that seen in art, information and communication technology (ICT) and in the sixth form is used as an example to others. College leaders, with good support from the governing body and local authority, have responded well to powerful external challenge and have successfully translated their ambition and drive to other staff and stakeholders. They have an exciting, ambitious and well-articulated vision for the future of the college and the site on which it is located. These features combine to evidence the college's good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build further on the work to improve students' attainment and progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that, by September 2010, all teaching in these subjects is at least good
 - raising students' aspirations of what they are capable of achieving.
- In order to achieve outstanding progress by the most able students:
 - ensure that all aspects of curriculum provision fully meet their needs
 - set targets that further increase the degree of challenge, especially to attain the very highest grades at GCSE and in sixth form courses.

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

Students make especially good progress in a wide range of subjects, notably art, ICT and in vocational courses offered in areas such as science and health and social care. Increasingly, they are making improved progress in English and mathematics because courses that fully meet their needs are now in place. Good additional provision is further improving the literacy, numeracy and ICT skills of all learners, especially of the younger students. A particular strength is students' ability to research and work independently and collaboratively. In an excellent BTEC science lesson, lower attaining Year 11 students were researching a topic about energy conservation. They made excellent progress with limited but timely intervention by the teacher and teaching assistant. In an outstanding ICT lesson using animation, Year 9 students' outstanding behaviour and enjoyment led to excellent progress. 'This is brilliant!' 'When can we do more of this?' were comments overheard. Achievement in the sixth form is good. In some respects, it is outstanding, for instance when Year 13 health and social care students overcame their squeamishness to dissect and examine a sheep's lung.

Behaviour throughout the college is good. In lessons, it is often better than this, but there can be good-natured lively behaviour in the narrow corridors. Members of the Student Voice Forum recognise this and have contributed ideas for the design of the

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new college building to overcome it. Others talk enthusiastically of their many other positive contributions to the community. At the time of the inspection, some students were meeting Her Majesty the Queen as members of their cadet force, others were preparing excitedly for a trip to Morocco to undertake charitable work. Students have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. Potentially disaffected students were sensibly discussing the dangers of a newly available and not yet illegal drug. All these elements combine to enable the students' good overall achievement and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is a growing strength of the college. Inspectors saw nothing that was inadequate, with a large majority of teaching being good and a significant number of lessons being outstanding. The college's outstanding use of its visual arts specialism is a strength that has an impact across the college, in subjects as diverse as ICT and science. Relationships between staff and students are very good: 'I can engage in social and professional conversations with my teachers,' wrote one Year 11 student.

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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Stimulating, challenging tasks and autonomy for students to complete them lead to good progress. In the small minority of less successful lessons, it is this opportunity for student autonomy that is sometimes lacking. Assessment is used well to plan students' individual programmes, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who attain lower standards. It is also used well to show students how to improve their work and to set them challenging targets, although these could be even more challenging for those capable of attaining the very highest grades. The assessment of their own and each other's work is a growing strength and a powerful tool for showing the student what is achievable.

Overall, the planning of the curriculum to meet the needs of almost all students, including those in the sixth form, is very good indeed. The college is aware that a little more attention is needed to fully meet the needs of the highest attainers and for those who wish to pursue certain courses in the sixth form. There is a very good range of additional activities that are popular and well subscribed.

Inspectors were pleasantly surprised by the detailed knowledge of individual students' needs shown by senior staff in this large college. This is a reflection of the excellent care, guidance and support that students receive. A very large majority enter the sixth form and an increasing number aspire to higher education, although there remain some with lower aspirations that the college works hard to raise. This reflects the excellent guidance they receive for the next stage of their education or employment. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the speech and language resource, receive excellent support, including from able and intelligently deployed teaching assistants.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

Leaders and managers know the college well. Monitoring and evaluation are accurate and effective, and have led to significant improvements, for example in the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science, in the curriculum for lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11, and in the provision for the inclusion of all students. These changes have led to improvements in student outcomes. All staff are passionate in their desire to see the college improve further and willingly take on extra responsibilities in order to do so. This exemplifies well the ambition and drive that emanates from the principal and senior team. Very effective subject leadership is a major factor in the

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improvement of teaching and learning. The governing body is also effective in challenging leaders to improve and in meeting its statutory responsibilities. Safeguarding procedures are of good quality and effective. For example, all requirements to keep students safe are in place and good attention is paid to their health and safety during the current major building programme. Equality of opportunity, for example for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is well-developed and has been taken into account in the design of the new college. Any potential discrimination is tackled effectively, for instance in recording and dealing with the rare instances of racist abuse. The college meets its duty to promote community cohesion well and was recently praised for its work in a national study, although students' opportunities to mix with people of different ethnicity and culture are limited.

The college has excellent links with parents, carers, and with its numerous partners, including others who provide sixth form and vocational courses, external agencies and local organisations. Parents and carers are consulted on a wide range of issues, but perhaps the most important quality is the support given to individuals. To quote a parent/carer, 'Without the school's help, my little family would have been in turmoil. I would like to say a big thank you to them all.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The good sixth form is a strength of the college. It is highly inclusive. All students are made welcome whatever their prior attainment or needs. A very good range of courses is provided in partnership with other educational establishments. There are a few gaps,

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including lower level courses for students interested in science, but the college is working hard to fill these. Students attain average standards which represents good progress. Again, college staff have spotted that attainment is higher in some subjects than others, especially at A level, and are putting in place strategies to correct this. Students are central to college life and make an excellent contribution, both in college and to the wider community. They speak highly of the college and the opportunities it offers them. Teaching is good and in some subjects it is excellent. The care, guidance and support students receive, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are very good indeed. Dynamic and enthusiastic leadership has brought about significant improvements, so that a number of features of the sixth form are already outstanding.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

Although the number of written comments was relatively small, it is clear from the responses to the questionnaire that a very large majority of parents and carers are satisfied with the college and the education it provides. Inspectors found no evidence to support the views of the very small minorities who raised concerns in a number of areas. The view that the college did not help their child to have a healthy lifestyle was supported by a small minority of students, but inspectors' evidence is that the college makes good provision in this area to which students respond well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Estover Community 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 255 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1216 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	21	174	68	26	10	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	57	22	180	71	11	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	67	26	166	65	14	5	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	29	151	59	16	6	7	3
The teaching is good at this school	63	25	161	63	21	8	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	24	150	59	29	11	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	12	175	69	30	12	6	2
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)	73	29	154	60	16	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	66	26	155	61	17	7	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	22	149	58	28	11	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	16	161	63	26	10	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	60	24	163	64	9	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	34	140	55	14	5	5	2

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



18 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Estover Community College, Plymouth PL6 8UN

Thank you for the time you gave to speaking with us and showing us your work when we visited the college recently. We found you to be friendly and mature young people. Estover is a good college and is continuing to improve.

- The progress you make is good and you are reaching higher standards, including in English and mathematics where standards have been low in the past.
- The teaching is good and in some subjects it is outstanding.
- The visual arts specialism and the sixth form are particular strengths of the college.
- You behave well in lessons, feel very safe in college and tell us that there is very little bullying.
- You make an excellent contribution to the college and other communities.
- You all receive excellent care, guidance and support. This is especially true for those of you who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or find education difficult for other reasons. Your attendance has improved and is above average. Well done!
- The principal and other senior staff are dynamic leaders. Their vision for the college's future is ambitious and achievable.

We have asked the college to improve teaching in English and mathematics even further and to make sure those of you who are high attainers (by this we mean those who reached Level 5 by the end of Year 6) achieve even higher standards.

We were a bit saddened to hear a few good students say things like 'I'm not good enough to be a " (doctor, for example). If you set yourself a goal, you can do it!

All the very best for the future

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler

Lead inspector

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