

Vale of Ancholme Technology & Music College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118100
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339142
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	736
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
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Headteacher	Mrs G Young
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 31 teachers and lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They also looked at a range of management documentation, external evaluation reports, students' work and 123 parental, 102 student and 59 staff questionnaires.

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

- the progress made by students, boys in particular, especially in English and mathematics
- the quality of teaching across year groups and subjects
- the quality of care, guidance and support and its impact on the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and on overall attendance
- the appropriateness of the sixth form curriculum and the effect of teaching on achievement
- the impact of improvements on students' outcomes.

Information about the school

Vale of Ancholme Technology and Music College is a smaller-than-average secondary school serving a wide rural area. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national figure but more than the average number have a statement of special educational needs. Vale has been a specialist technology college since September 2002 and the second specialism, music, was added in 2007.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Vale is a satisfactory school that has improved considerably since September 2009. For a number of years, rising GCSE pass rates encouraged a degree of complacency amongst staff but that changed last summer when an analysis of examination results highlighted serious concerns. Despite a dramatic rise in the proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, students and particularly boys had made significantly less progress than those in similar schools. Further analysis revealed that students across the college were not making sufficient progress. It became clear that the increase in GCSE passes was more attributable to changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum and effective intervention strategies in Year 11 than to better teaching and learning across the college.

Leaders, governors and teachers were galvanised into action. A more robust tracking system was introduced to monitor students' progress, tough action was taken to improve the quality of teaching and challenging targets were set for teachers and students. Internal data and modular external examination results show that the combination of actions is having a positive impact on outcomes for students.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. There are examples of outstanding practice and decisive action has been taken to address any inadequate teaching. However, not all teachers are paying sufficient attention to planning different activities that match the range of ability in the group. The most able students are not always challenged sufficiently and students in the weaker lessons are not encouraged to work independently. Successful strategies have been introduced to encourage boys in some subjects, but not all. In lessons where learning is satisfactory rather than good, teachers are not sufficiently skilled at adapting their plans during the lesson in response to regular checks on what students are learning.

The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has been broadened to include extra vocational courses that are enabling more students to succeed. The sixth form curriculum has also been expanded to include vocational provision but there are no Level 1 or Level 2 courses to meet the needs of lower ability students.

The specialist subjects are playing a key role in driving improvements. The new college tracking system was developed in technology and proved very successful in improving GCSE design and technology pass rates. Both the music and technology departments are sharing good practice in teaching and learning across the college.

The senior leadership team, governors and middle managers have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, but quality assurance systems for the sixth form are weak. Middle managers are working together more

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effectively and governance is good. Senior leaders and governors have worked very successfully to reduce the budget deficit and improve specialist facilities. Resources are deployed well and the college provides satisfactory value for money. The rising trend of improvement across the college this year shows a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning and progress across the college by:
 - improve the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that learning strategies and activities meet the needs of boys
 - actively promoting independent learning
 - making sure teachers observe, question and listen to students in order to re-shape tasks and explanations during lessons.
- Challenge the most able students at every opportunity.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form by ensuring that provision is more closely matched to students' needs and that quality assurance systems are rigorous.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The Key Stage 2 results of students joining the college show that their attainment on entry is average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average and the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C has risen year on year. The increase of 20 percentage points last year lifted the college significantly above the national average. Improvement has been much slower in English and mathematics but modular examination results and internal data indicate a more marked improvement this year. Attainment in Key Stage 3 is also improving and are broadly average. Achievement across the college improved in 2008 then deteriorated in 2009, but college data suggest that achievement is satisfactory this year. The work and progress seen by inspectors in lessons was satisfactory overall. In the best lessons students participated very well, the pace was lively and work was of a high quality, but in the weaker lessons students were passive and learning was more laboured. The gap between boys' and girls' performance is wider than average but boys are beginning to close the gap. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants in lessons and make satisfactory progress.

Students' personal development and well-being are mostly satisfactory and some aspects are good. Students are very well informed about internet safety and the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Many students follow healthy lifestyles and participate in sporting activities. Attendance has improved markedly this year to above average. Behaviour is good around college; students are considerate towards each other and little

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prompting is needed in lessons to maintain discipline. Positive behaviour contributes to good learning in the best lessons, but there is low-level disruption or a lack of engagement in weaker lessons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The fundamental structure of lessons is sound with teachers sharing lesson objectives, driving activities and reviewing progress in at least one plenary session. All teachers use an agreed template for planning lessons which ensures they consider the differing attainment and needs of students, but the quality of planning to meet those needs is variable. There is outstanding practice where assessment information is used well to enhance learning. In weaker lessons, however, teachers talk for too long, do not check learning effectively enough during the lesson and are slow to change their approach in reaction to students' responses. Students are not given enough opportunity to work independently and the most able students are not being challenged enough. The quality of marking is variable and written feedback ranges from cursory to very detailed and constructive, but most is at least satisfactory.

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 curriculum is tailored broadly to the needs of students in Key Stages 3 and 4, with effective liaison to support progression. BTEC courses offer an appropriate alternative to GCSEs for students for whom a vocational approach is more suitable. There is an alternative curriculum for students wanting a more practical style of learning that includes skills-based courses at a local further education college. Plans are being developed to encourage the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very effective and there are good examples of the college helping vulnerable students to progress. Intervention and 'catch up' programmes are working well. Advice and guidance are satisfactory and the college recognises that tutors need further training to meet the demands of students from different years and key stages.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal has a very accurate view of the college and a clear vision for the future. The pace of improvement has quickened this year and there is renewed purpose and drive across the college. Performance management is robust, middle managers are more accountable and the monitoring of teaching and learning is more rigorous and comprehensive. Weaknesses in teaching are being purposefully addressed.

Governors are very well informed and have a good grasp of the issues facing the college. They have a good range of expertise and local knowledge that is utilised well. They are active in setting priorities for improvement and have good links with subject areas. They support and challenge senior and middle leaders when appropriate and they also evaluate their own performance.

The college, including the governors, regularly seek the views of parents and take action to address any areas of concern. A member of the senior leadership team, usually the principal, is available to see parents at two surgery times every week in response to parents' concerns about a lack of opportunity for direct contact with college leaders. Changes to parents' evenings have met with a mixed response from parents and further modifications are planned for next year to address their concerns.

There are strong partnerships with primary schools and the local community, particularly through the specialist subjects. Partnerships with specialist support agencies are keeping students safe and supporting the most vulnerable. Close links with local schools and

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colleges provide a broader and more appropriate curriculum for students aged 14 to 19. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively in the curriculum and assemblies. Leaders monitor the performance of different groups of students closely throughout the year but there are still gaps. Governors and managers have carried out an audit of community cohesion activity, introduced a plan and evaluated its impact but many of the strategies to promote community cohesion, locally and internationally, are still in the early stages.

Safeguarding procedures are robust, policies are thorough and responsibilities are clear. Records are well kept and the rolling programme of training keeps staff and governors well informed and updated. Agency staff, such as cleaners, also receive basic training.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Sixth formers make satisfactory progress relative to their starting points and most are retained to the end of their course. Attendance is good. Sixth formers contribute to the college community by coaching younger students in sports and music, helping in primary schools and organising a charity week. Teaching is satisfactory and relationships between staff and students are good. Small class sizes facilitate individual tuition, but opportunities to learn from more able students and benefit from lively discussions are limited. By working in partnership with two other schools the college has been able to broaden the curriculum and introduce more vocational courses to meet students' needs. However, the college has been slow to introduce Level 1 and 2 courses. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is effective but quality assurance systems and the use of

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management information are under-developed.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from just over 16% of parents and carers and 65% of these were entirely positive in their views of the college. Almost all thought that the college keeps their children safe and that teaching is good. A very large majority say their child enjoys college and is making enough progress. The major concern, shared by around 30% of parents who responded, was whether the college takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Governors and managers are already aware of this concern and have introduced initiatives to improve communication and responsiveness.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Vale of Ancholme Technology & Music 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 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 736 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	26	84	68	6	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	47	38	70	57	5	4	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	38	63	51	11	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	31	76	62	7	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	33	77	63	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	26	64	52	21	17	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	22	80	65	15	12	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	33	69	56	7	6	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	34	68	55	9	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	37	52	42	13	11	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	27	51	41	22	18	7	6
The school is led and managed effectively	40	33	57	46	15	12	7	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	37	66	54	8	7	3	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

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). 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.



29 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Vale of Ancholme Technology & Music College, Brigg,
DN20 8BA

Thank you for welcoming us to your college. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. Here is a summary of our findings.

- Although 81% of Year 11 students got five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C last year, only 53% also got good grades in English and mathematics. Many were capable of doing better – boys especially.
- Attendance has improved considerably this year and behaviour is satisfactory. You behave well around the college but not everyone participates well in lessons – some of you 'switch off' or distract others by chattering.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall with examples of good and outstanding teaching.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well both in and out of the classroom.
- College leaders are driving improvement well and governors are doing a good job.
- Results in the sixth form dropped last year but are expected to improve this summer. The choice of courses has expanded to include BTECs but the college has been slow to offer Level 1 and 2 courses.

In order to improve further we have asked the college to:

Improve learning and progress by:

- increasing the proportion of lessons where learning is good or better
- ensuring that learning activities meet the needs of boys
- making sure teachers actively promote independent learning
- ensuring teachers observe, question and listen to you in lessons in order to re-shape tasks and explanations during the lesson.

Challenge the most able students at every opportunity.

Improve outcomes in the sixth form by ensuring that provision is more closely matched to students' needs and quality assurance systems are rigorous.

I hope that you will all play your part in helping the college to improve.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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