

Countesthorpe Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120268
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339658
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis HMI

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	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1041
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Wood
Headteacher	ntesthorpe Community College
Date of previous school inspection	5 January 2007
School address	Winchester Road Countesthorpe Leicestershire
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons, and held meetings with staff, groups of students and the chair of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, minutes of meetings, staff and student questionnaires and 154 parental questionnaires.

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

- boys' achievement
- leadership and management of the college's specialist subjects of mathematics, design and technology and science
- teachers' use of target setting and strategies to meet students' differing abilities in lessons
- the college's work in promoting healthy lifestyles.

Information about the school

Countesthorpe is a large community college with a large sixth form. Students attend from across a wide geographical area including both rural and city homes. More than half of students travel to the college by bus. Most students are from White British backgrounds. A smaller than average proportion of students is eligible for free school meals. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. The college has a cr che and an Early Years Centre and provides a breakfast and after-school club for the local community as part of its extended school service. A programme of adult classes runs at the college for over 1500 students. A special school for 30 students with moderate to severe special educational needs and/or disabilities is located within the college's main building and its students share the college's facilities. The college has held specialist technology status since 2005.

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

2

Main findings

Countesthorpe Community College is satisfactory in its overall effectiveness and has a number of good features. The sixth form and the Early Years Foundation Stage provision have good overall effectiveness. The college's curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided for students are also good. The college provides a highly safe, inclusive and friendly environment for its students, who come from a wide range of backgrounds and enjoy college life. They value the open and supportive ethos of the college which helps them to develop well both personally and socially.

Students' achievement is satisfactory and improving. Results are broadly average. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning although their rate of progress varies between subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Students' behaviour is good and their attendance is average. They are prepared well for their future economic well-being. Cultural development is limited because too few cross-college activities promote cultural themes or develop students' understanding of the wider world. The impact of the college's work in promoting healthy lifestyles is satisfactory. Physical activities are given less priority than other aspects of college life and some parents and some students rightly judge that more could be done to promote this aspect.

Learning is satisfactory and lessons increasingly contain good features. Teachers' strategies, however, do not always ensure that all students make good progress in their learning, partly because of limited involvement by students and too little encouragement for students to think for themselves. Assessment generally supports learning but not enough use is made of ongoing assessment in lessons. The college's good curriculum contributes well to the improving levels of achievement. Pastoral care is a significant strength of the college. Guidance and support for students who are at risk of underachievement have improved notably since the last inspection and are good.

The principal's strong leadership, well supported by senior managers, has brought about substantial improvement in a majority of outcomes from a low base. Managers have tackled a number of weaknesses, such as boys' achievement, well. Middle managers are improving their skill and expertise rapidly. Teaching, however, is only just starting to improve, in part due to considerable turbulence in staffing in several subjects. Specialist status is used well across the curriculum but results in technology and mathematics are below average. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and mostly accurate. These factors contribute to the college's good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that teaching consistently promotes good learning by:
 - developing students' independent learning skills and involving them fully in learning activities
 - using questions to develop students' thinking and extend their knowledge
 - assessing students' understanding and skill development frequently during lessons
 - sharing effective teaching approaches across subject departments.
- Increase the impact of the college's work in promoting healthy lifestyles by:
 - increasing the amount of curriculum time allocated to physical education
 - encouraging a higher take-up of a wider range of extra-curricular physical activities.
- Use community, regional, national and global sources to develop cross-college cultural themes to support students' understanding of the wider world.
- 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

Students join the college with prior attainment that is close to the national average. In 2009, the percentage of students who gained five good grades at GCSE continued the strongly improving trend between 2006 and 2008 and is in line with the national average. For the same measure, including English and mathematics, results were broadly similar to those achieved in 2008. Results in English are well above average but remain below average in a number of other subjects including mathematics and the college's other specialist subject of design and technology.

Since the last inspection, students' rate of progress has improved steadily but some still did not meet their expectations, especially boys and students in mathematics. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially those with a statement of special educational need, make consistently good progress. In 2009, the rate of progress improved notably. Most students work hard and make at least satisfactory progress, evident from observations of their work in lessons and from scrutiny of assessed work. In particular, boys' learning and the rate of students' progress in mathematics and English have improved dramatically. Behaviour and attitudes to work have improved and are good and productive. In a few lessons, students show passive behaviour, often when teaching is uninspiring. Safety awareness by students is high.

Students contribute well to college and community life through a range of activities including through the college council and by taking responsibilities in the college.

Students learn useful workplace skills and almost all progress into positive destinations on leaving. Attendance is slightly above average but the level of persistent absenteeism has risen to above average. Students develop well spiritually, socially and morally. They learn about culture through the humanities curriculum but their exposure to other

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cultural experiences across a wider spectrum is limited.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Most teachers plan thoroughly and manage lessons well. They use information and learning technology effectively in many lessons. A good range of activities is included in the majority of lessons but not all are effective. Questioning is often ineffective in developing, extending and challenging students' learning. There is sometimes too much time spent copying from texts or an over reliance on the teacher to take a lead during activities. Marking of work varies considerably in quality. Too much is based on the use of ticks with only a few comments and little indication of the level achieved or what students need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum provides good breadth and balance with a range of opportunities targeted at identified groups of students with specific needs. These features have contributed significantly to students' improving achievement. Partnerships, including with local businesses, are used well to develop learning opportunities. Curriculum time allocated to physical education is limited. The college's literacy strategy has been

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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relaunched but cross-curricular literacy development is limited. A wide range of enrichment activities is in place which add to students' enjoyment, although uptake in sports activities is generally less than usually found.

The college has good systems in place to support students across a whole range of specialist areas. Staff tackle persistent absenteeism relentlessly. Data about students' performance and their level of motivation are used widely and frequently by teachers and managers, including to set challenging targets. Actions needed to support students at risk of underachievement are taken quickly and are increasingly effective. Guidance and support during transition points in students' lives are highly effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong focus on improvement across the college and most staff are committed to and proud of the college. Middle managers, a number of whom are new to their posts, are taking an increasingly accountable role and are empowered to do so through good support from senior managers. Data are used effectively although some systems are relatively new. The performance of different groups of students is monitored carefully to ensure equality of opportunity. Monitoring of teaching and learning has taken on a sharper focus recently, but without consistent impact on its quality. Sharing of good practice in teaching across subjects is limited. Departments have a clear agenda for improvement based on thorough annual reviews; stability of staffing has improved and departments are well placed to ensure the necessary improvement in teaching takes place. Management of the college's specialism is improving from a low base.

Governors are knowledgeable and use their expertise wisely. Engagement with parents and carers is given high priority and achieved through a wide range of ways including a parents' forum. Partnership work, such as in developing Diploma courses and work with youth organisations, benefits students in both their personal and academic development. Arrangements for safeguarding are exceptionally robust because staff, including governors, are very knowledgeable about this aspect and no stone is left unturned in ensuring a safe environment. Although the college is at the centre of the community and is involved in a wide range of initiatives, an analysis of need across all aspects of the community has not been undertaken to inform actions to promote specific areas.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

Over half of students in Year 11 stay on into the sixth form; retention rates have improved in Year 12, and over both years are high. Almost all students make good use of their education on leaving the college with a high proportion progressing into higher education. Results in external examinations are improving, especially the proportion of students who gain high grades in GCE A levels. Compared to their starting points, students make good progress and develop maturity and confidence.

The curriculum is well suited to students' needs and gives them a broad choice of subjects. The introduction of vocational courses has supported the increased staying on rates. Insufficient curriculum time, however, is devoted to religious education. The priority given to promoting extra-curricular physical education is low. Teaching is satisfactory with good features, especially in the structuring of lessons and development of comprehensive schemes of work including strong links with assessment. Students value their relationship with teachers and the high level of support and guidance given to them throughout their courses. The focus on individual support has improved and this aspect is significant in the improving trend in achievement. Students have an effective voice in the development of the sixth form and managers respond well to their views. Self-evaluation is accurate and uses performance data well; evaluation of the quality of teaching is less rigorous.

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

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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

The rate of response by parents and carers was low. Of 154 questionnaires received, 137 were analysed and the remaining 17 checked by inspectors. The very large majority of respondents expressed agreement with 10 of the 13 statements and a large majority expressed agreement with all 13 statements. The vast majority of respondents agreed that that the college keeps students safe. A very high percentage strongly agreed that they were happy with students' experience at the college. A small minority expressed concern about the help given to promote healthy lifestyles and inspectors agree that not enough emphasis is placed on promoting physical fitness through exercise.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Countesthorpe 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 154 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1041 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	31	84	61	8	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	46	34	89	65	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	29	76	56	7	5	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	37	73	54	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	26	78	57	10	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	26	79	58	13	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	10	83	61	27	20	1	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)	24	18	88	65	10	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	30	79	58	8	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	16	82	60	17	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	21	71	52	10	7	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	44	32	81	60	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	46	55	46	7	6	0	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



9 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Countesthorpe Community College, Countesthorpe, LE8 5PR

Thank you for your input into the college's inspection. Your views and our observations of your work in lessons and around the college proved very helpful to the inspection team. Inspectors judged the college to be satisfactory in its overall effectiveness. These are our main findings:

results in external examinations have been improving and are broadly average; results are good in some subjects including English but need to improve in others including mathematics and design and technology

most of you make satisfactory progress in your learning and benefit from the college's good work in promoting personal, social and employability skills; your cultural development is less effective and this aspect of the college's work needs to be broadened

attendance is satisfactory but persistent absenteeism is increasing a little; you must make sure you all give yourselves the best chance to do well by attending regularly

the college needs to do more to support you in developing healthy lifestyles

the curriculum is good and meets your various needs and you receive good care, guidance and support throughout your time at college, especially during transition points

the college safeguards you well in every respect

teaching is satisfactory; teachers plan and manage lessons well but do not always involve you enough and make sure you think for yourselves; their use of assessment is satisfactory but needs to be increased during lessons

the sixth form is good; students achieve well, gain maturity and are well prepared for their next steps

the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is good

the principal and managers make sure that the college is improving in many ways; some aspects are taking longer to improve than others, but there is a real drive and determination to ensure you all fulfil your potential.

I wish you well in your time at the college and hope you continue to make a positive contribution to both college and community life.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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