

Hamilton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120285
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	339665
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	941
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Chimley
Headteacher	John Morris
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. In total, observations were made of 42 different teachers across the college, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. The inspectors observed the college's work, and looked at the documentation relating to the safeguarding of students, the progress students are making in their learning, the college's improvement plans and evaluations of its impact. Inspectors analysed 90 parental questionnaire responses and questionnaires returned by some staff and a sample of over 200 students. Meetings were held with nominated staff, a representative from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of students.

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

- the impact of the college's work on raising standards and closing the gap in attainment against national figures, particularly in English and mathematics
- the quality of students' learning and their progress over time
- the effectiveness of teaching and curriculum provision in meeting the diverse needs of students
- the impact of the college's work on improving attendance.

Information about the school

Hamilton Community College serves a suburban area that experiences comparatively high levels of social mobility and socio-economic disadvantage and where adults have had comparatively low levels of participation in further or higher education. Almost a third of its students are from minority ethnic backgrounds; one in four students does not speak English as their first language. The college faces significant challenges, particularly in regard to high levels of turbulence. Each year more than 100 students join the college at times other than the start of the year; many of these students come from abroad with little or no English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national figure. There are 10 looked after children on the college roll. The college has had specialist technology status since 2002, and is the hub school for extended services in the locality.

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

1

Main findings

The college provides a good education for its students and has some outstanding elements in its provision. Its excellent leadership has engineered remarkable progress since the last inspection and demonstrates outstanding capacity for further improvement. The most obvious improvement has been in raising standards, but much has also been achieved in strengthening every aspect of the college's provision so that all other outcomes for students have also improved. The college has achieved record results year-on-year for the last three years; these far exceed its targets, including its specialist targets, and close the gap on national figures. The unswerving leadership of the outstanding Principal, ably supported by a strong team of senior and middle leaders, has guided the college's development. The improvements have been driven by a combination of hard work from all staff and a relentless focus on strengthening the quality of teaching and learning, aligned with excellent support for specific groups of students. Ambition is genuinely embedded in every classroom. Self-evaluation is rigorous and guides effectively the college's development planning.

Students make good progress, often from very low starting points to reach standards at the end of Year 11 that are broadly in line with age-related expectations, even though results in English and mathematics are slightly lower than average. Specialist subjects make a strong contribution to students' outcomes. The college places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of all of its work, so that any potential disparities or disadvantages are minimised. Targeted support for key groups ensures that progress is particularly impressive for those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, students eligible for free school meals, those who are new arrivals and students who speak English as an additional language.

The college provides outstandingly good care, guidance and support. A number of parents were fulsome in their praise for the efforts and commitment of staff in meeting their children's individual needs. The students' safety and well-being are central to its everyday work, ensuring students feel extremely safe and benefit from a calm and positive environment for learning. Behaviour around the college is often exemplary. In lessons students also behave well but they often lack the assurance or independence to confidently tackle new work or to articulate their own ideas. Teaching is good and the best lessons are mindful of the need to develop students' wider skills, including their literacy. The curriculum is well structured to meet the particular needs of individual students and different groups, but does not provide sufficient enrichment or breadth of experiences for all students.

The ongoing challenge to raise standards remains, particularly with regard to improving students' literacy and in the context of high levels of student mobility. The college

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recognises that although students are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education, much more needs to be done to secure their high attainment in mathematics and English and to ensure that they have the personal skills and self-confidence to make the most of opportunities in later life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the drive to raise standards by being more systematic in developing students' skills in speaking, listening and writing and ensuring that all staff understand their role in modelling literacy.
- Develop the students' wider personal skills so that they are better prepared for the next stage of their education and later life by:
 - ensuring that teaching fosters students' independence, presentational skills, enterprising attitudes and self-confidence
 - enriching the curriculum to offer broad and memorable experiences for all students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry is very low, but students make good progress from their starting points to achieve standards that are broadly in line with age-related expectations by the time that they leave school. High levels of mobility undermine the progress that some students are able to make. However, almost all groups, including new arrivals, make accelerated progress because the college is meticulous in identifying their particular needs and tackling potential barriers to good achievement. The college is rightly proud that all students who left the college last year found places in education, training or employment.

The quality of learning in lessons is good. Students settle quickly to their work, sustain their concentration and collaborate well. They occasionally show real independence, when teaching fosters their self-belief, but many students are reticent learners and lack confidence in presenting their ideas. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly good and often outstanding because of the high-quality guidance and support they receive.

Students' wider personal development is particularly good. They feel completely safe and respond positively to all that the college provides and enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The weekly 'culture club', for example, attracts up to 50 students and more than 50 attend the daily breakfast club. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate well in optional physical activities. Their good behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning in lessons and reflects their positive social and moral attitudes. Many students willingly contribute to the life of the college and beyond through the work of the student council, the sports leaders, and through local and international charity links.

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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	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good-quality teaching is securely based on strong relationships, detailed planning and high expectations of how students will behave and what they will achieve. This enables learning to proceed at a brisk pace with little wasted time. Imaginative use is made of resources, including new technology, to spark the students' curiosity and secure their engagement. Rigorous assessment and detailed feedback, including effective marking ensure that students are well aware of their targets, their progress and what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is suitably organised so that students with different abilities can follow particular 'pathways' that are well matched to their learning needs. Students can opt from an interesting range of courses at Key Stage 4, including an impressive number of vocational qualifications. Some unusual options, such as land management and law, really broaden students' learning as well as providing useful qualifications. Good levels of participation in such courses demonstrate the attraction and value of widening students' experiences.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because of the detailed attention the

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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college gives to the needs of all individuals, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are always prepared to 'go the extra mile' to ensure that students flourish in a safe and supportive environment. The college's work with its students who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances, to reduce exclusions, improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism has been particularly effective. The arrangements for students arriving at the school with little or no English are carefully managed so that they make excellent progress in gaining language skills and in accessing rapidly the main curriculum. Some students only stay for short periods and the college is rigorous in ensuring they maximise the time available.

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?

The college's leadership and management are outstandingly effective because senior leaders are conspicuously ambitious and highly successful in inspiring the school community to embrace ever-higher expectations. Morale is high and belief in the school's success is shared by all staff and governors. High aspiration is underpinned by sharply-focused development planning, rigorous monitoring and robust self-evaluation. The college's significantly improved performance is soundly based on strengthening all aspects of provision, but particularly the quality of classroom teaching. Senior leaders are relentless in securing high-quality teachers and support staff so that support precisely meets the needs of a range of complex needs.

Equality of opportunity and social harmony are at the heart of the college's work. Rigorous monitoring of students' performance constantly shapes the college's interventions and support so that any unevenness between different groups is addressed. Community cohesion is promoted strategically and is embedded in the everyday work of the college. Students of all ages and from different backgrounds mix easily and show respect for one another, and newcomers are made welcome. Procedures for safeguarding students are implemented and reviewed with exceptional rigour. The college makes uses of a wide range of different partnerships to promote students' academic development and personal well-being and has positive relationships with most parents. When students or parents have proved difficult to engage, the college has been determined and successful in seeking different ways to support families so that their children are not disadvantaged in school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire agreed with every one of the 13 statements in the survey. Most are happy with their child's experience at the college, and are overwhelmingly positive in agreement that the college keeps students safe, that it meets their individual needs and that it is effectively led and managed. A significant number of parents took time to make additional comments about the time and care that staff dedicated to their children. A very small minority felt that the college does not take account of their suggestions and concerns, and a few cited specific instances when bullying had not been adequately addressed. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and consider that the college works hard to liaise with parents and to respond appropriately to their concerns. It is clear that the college takes seriously any instances of bullying and deals with them swiftly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hamilton 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 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 941 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	40	45	50	4	4	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	41	46	41	46	6	7	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	54	60	31	34	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	46	41	46	7	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	43	44	49	7	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	37	40	44	16	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	34	53	59	5	6	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)	30	33	50	56	6	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	36	53	59	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	38	41	46	11	12	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	33	42	47	17	19	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	38	49	54	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	49	36	40	8	9	2	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.



11 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Hamilton Community College, Leicester, LE5 1RT

Thank you for making such a positive contribution to our recent inspection. We appreciated the time that you took to speak to us and were impressed by your good behaviour and your courtesy towards us as visitors. Your views, alongside the survey responses from your parents, were helpful in confirming our first-hand observations and the college's self-evaluation. We were particularly impressed by:

- the remarkable improvement in standards since the last inspection
- the college's outstanding care, guidance and support, including its excellent safeguarding procedures
- the strength of the college's leadership and its capacity to sustain improvement and achieve even better outcomes.

It is obvious that, apart from looking after you exceptionally well, the college is very ambitious for all of you. Senior leaders are well aware of the college's strengths and future priorities. We agree that, apart from continuing its good work, the college needs to keep striving for better results and to give you the best possible preparation for 'life after Hamilton Community College'. The main priorities are:

- to see that you achieve the highest possible standards, so that you are properly equipped for the next stage of your education
- to ensure that you develop the self-confidence, enterprise and independence that will enable you to be highly successful in later life.

You obviously have a key role to play because you must have the highest expectations of what you can achieve and must also be prepared to take responsibility for your own learning and development. Apart from good attendance, this means participating fully in all that the college offers, taking responsibility for your own welfare and working hard. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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