

John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120648
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339743
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	638
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Bauer
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Carey
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Just over 50% of time was spent observing learning, including 41 lessons and teachers. Inspectors held meetings with students, governors and staff. In addition they analysed documentation, including the college's self-evaluation, improvement plan, lesson plans, tracking and assessment data, and the questionnaires submitted by 217 parents and carers.

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

- what the school is doing to promote the learning and progress of higher attaining students and in particular that of girls
- whether attainment in mathematics has caught up with that for English
- the achievement and progress of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

The college is smaller than the majority of secondary schools. The percentage of students entitled to a free school meal is broadly average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is very low. Over one third of students are identified as having special educational needs. The percentage of students with a statement for their special educational need and/or disability is also much higher than average.

The college has specialist technology status. Its work is also recognised by the Healthy Schools Award and the International Schools Award. The college is part of the Wolds and East Education Trust.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The college provides its students with an outstanding quality of education. Several parents used terms, such as 'amazing' and 'fantastic', to express their feelings about the provision. Usually attainment on entry is well below that expected for eleven year olds and in some years it is very low. From their various starting points the majority of students go on to make excellent progress, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who benefit greatly from the excellent support they receive. Attainment has improved dramatically. Over the last two years the proportion of students attaining five A* to C passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has more than doubled. The number of students gaining the nationally expected levels at the end of Year 9 is also increasing markedly. Based on this often remarkable progress, attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is now firmly established at broadly average levels. Students' work and teachers' assessments show that standards in 2010 are on course to be the highest the college has ever attained. The developing range of vocational courses is proving to be increasingly effective in meeting students' learning needs. Similarly, the college's specialist technology status also has a positive impact in students' learning and progress. As a result only a very small number of students fail to find employment or do not continue with their education.

The historic gap in attainment between boys and girls, in which boys tended to do better, has now been closed, with both genders making exceptional progress. Similarly the progress of the most able students has also improved and the college makes good provision for those who have special abilities and talents. That said, occasionally work is not matched closely enough to the needs of these students and then the pace of progress tends to slacken. In the past, attainment in mathematics tended to lag behind that in English. As a result of some very effective teaching this is no longer the case. Even so, whilst attainment has improved, students' progress in some lessons diminishes because not enough attention is given to consolidating students' oral and mental skills. Teaching is excellent and the vast majority of lessons contain activities that are ideally suited to the students' needs. Students are well informed about the progress they are making and how to improve their work. They are very appreciative of the support they receive and clearly enjoy the wide range of activities provided. One student commented, 'I can't imagine a better school. I don't want to leave'. The consistent celebration of students' efforts and successes is a prominent feature of lessons and helps students to become confident and well-motivated learners.

The college has made significant improvements since it was last inspected, driven by the outstanding contributions of the headteacher and senior leadership team. Attainment

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has improved dramatically and the quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding as a result of accurate self-evaluation and sharply focused improvement planning. The headteacher and senior leaders successfully motivate staff to strive for constant improvement and are supported well by the governing body. These features provide a clear pointer towards the college's exceptional capacity to sustain its improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further refine strategies to ensure the most able students are challenged appropriately in every lesson by:
 - consistently identifying their needs in lesson plans
 - reviewing practice amongst staff and consulting students about the level of challenge they experience.
- Focus even more closely on the development of students' mental and oral skills in mathematics by ensuring this plays a part in every mathematics lesson.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students' enjoyment of their learning is reflected in their attendance, which is well above the average for secondary schools. Students say they feel safe and well cared for, which is reflected in both their academic and social development. They are certainly very knowledgeable about how to stay fit and healthy. Behaviour is exemplary. Relationships with adults are excellent and students are very caring and supportive towards each other. They also apply themselves well during lessons and are confident and enthusiastic learners. This is partly because of the college's focus on providing students with the skills they need to learn effectively. In addition to academic objectives and targets, all lessons contain a prominent focus on learning skills, such as working together, contributing to discussion, answering questions or working independently. This approach, coupled with initiatives that focus on developing students as competent learners, is proving to be very effective and supports students in developing their skills for the future, including the world of work. In lessons observed during the inspection students often made exceptional progress and their learning was outstanding.

Students make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and to the wider community. They participate in activities, such as the 'Rock Challenge' and the various sports clubs with great enthusiasm. They also raise funds for charities, including for those less fortunate in other parts of the world. Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although opportunities for them to reflect on significant issues during events such as assemblies are sometimes missed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have high expectations that students will work hard and behave well. In this respect students do not disappoint. Lesson content is invariably well matched to students' needs and abilities, although just occasionally the most able are not challenged sufficiently. The vast majority of lessons are stimulating and capture students' interest. Consequently, students participate well by responding thoughtfully to teachers' questions and by posing questions of their own. Given the challenges that many students face, particularly those who have special educational needs, their speaking and listening skills are developed exceptionally well. This is because teachers involve students well and frequently pose challenging questions. Assessment is used very effectively to promote students' learning. Students are very well informed about their targets for attainment and about how to improve their work. Throughout the course of lessons teachers manage this aspect of students' development exceptionally well. What students are expected to learn is made clear and they are provided with the analytical skills they need for a clear insight into how well they are performing. Target setting for attainment is a prominent feature of the daily tutor sessions, with outcomes and plans for the future shared with students and their parents at review meetings with students' tutors.

The curriculum meets students' learning needs well and there is an excellent range of additional activities and educational visits. The parallel development of students' educational and social needs is a seamless robe and a part of every lesson. A widening range of vocational courses, such as the Engineering Diploma, is proving to be ideal in meeting the needs of many students. The college is seeking to extend this range further

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as some of the courses have not been in place long enough to impact fully on standards. The college is a prominent founding partner in the Wolds and East Educational Trust, which is helping to prepare students well for the future.

The exceptional care, guidance and support that students receive are a key component in the excellent progress they make. The background and challenges that each student faces are well known to staff. Those students, who because of their circumstances might be potentially at risk, are supported very well. The provision for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is exemplary in every respect. The liaison with specialist agencies and with parents and carers to support these students' is first class. The college has a system of tutor groups, which meet each day, and contain students from the full age range. These groups contribute significantly to students acquiring learning skills. They also underpin the college's philosophy that all students should care for each other, which they do very successfully.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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 colleges' success is underpinned by the visionary leadership of the headteacher and by rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. Senior leaders analyse and use the available assessment data very effectively. They apply their findings from this process for early identification and response to any shortfalls in students' progress and to set challenging targets for attainment at all levels. Improvements in standards and in major aspects of provision mean that targets are invariably met, including those which measure the impact of the college's specialist status. Central to raising standards is the very effective management of teaching and learning. Staff at all levels have responded brilliantly to a range of excellent initiatives for improvement and arrangements for their continued professional development are outstanding. Above all, the college's exemplary work in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating any form of discrimination underpins the outstanding progress made by many students.

Governors fulfil their duties well. They are knowledgeable about what the college needs to do to maintain its improvement and the support they provide is greatly valued by senior managers. Arrangements for safeguarding students and ensuring their well-being are comprehensive and rigorously applied by staff across all aspects of the schools work. These arrangements fully meet all the current requirements.

The college makes a valuable contribution to its community at all levels, including its

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outreach work to other schools based on the technology specialism. It has recently gained the International Schools Award, of which it is rightly proud. Students and staff are involved exceptionally well in developing links with schools in Montpellier, Guadalupe and Tanzania, which significantly enrich student's appreciation of the wider world. Resources are used wisely and the college's financial management has gained an external seal of approval for its efficiency. The results of the college's carefully targeted spending on providing support for students who have special educational needs provides a shining example of the excellent value for money it gives.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire hold positive views about the college and are pleased with the quality of education it provides. A few parents voiced concerns about the degree to which their children are happy at college, the help they receive to support their child's learning and how the college deals with instances of unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection to support these assertions, judging these aspects of the college's work as outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Spendluffe Foundation Technology 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 217 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 638 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	30	127	58	20	9	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	85	39	120	55	7	3	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	85	39	123	56	8	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	32	132	61	11	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	66	30	138	64	8	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	29	127	59	20	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	25	147	67	12	6	3	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)	57	26	134	62	9	4	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	33	129	59	6	3	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	77	35	112	51	19	9	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	22	132	61	12	6	6	3
The school is led and managed effectively	73	34	128	59	9	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	41	112	52	14	6	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools 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.



Friday 5 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College, Alford, LN13 9BL

You may recall we visited recently to inspect your college. I would like to thank those of you who helped by giving your time to talk with us and for sharing your work. Our findings reflect what many of you told us. The college provides you with an outstanding quality of education. Certainly your teachers and the other staff are doing all they can to provide you with every opportunity to be successful in the future.

Standards, when compared with those found in other schools, have risen markedly over recent years. The current year is likely to be the best ever. Well done! For your part, many of you have made dramatic progress. It is pleasing to see that those of you who sometimes find learning a challenge also make exceptional progress. This is because your headteacher, senior staff and governors do all within their power to ensure you have everything you need to learn successfully. You also benefit from some excellent teaching and from support staff who are always ready to give you all the help you need. To help maintain the current improvements we are asking your teachers to:

- make sure that the most able amongst you are challenged even further in every lesson
- focus even more closely on the development of your mental and oral skills in mathematics.

The inspection team was very impressed by your excellent behaviour and by the ways you are willing take responsibility for your own learning. Finally, it was very heartening to hear one student say that if she won the lottery she would use her winnings to build a sixth form, enabling her to stay on at the college.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector

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