

Dawlish Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113518
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289663
Inspection date	23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoff Hancock

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	839
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Webb
Headteacher	Andrew Davis
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001
School address	Elm Grove Road Dawlish EX7 0BY
Telephone number	01626 862318
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Dawlish Community College is a smaller than average comprehensive college. It achieved Technology College status in 2005. Most students are from White British backgrounds and live in Dawlish and the surrounding villages. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The headteacher has only been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dawlish Community College is a satisfactory and improving college with many good features. The leadership of the college correctly recognises the need to stretch and challenge the students to achieve more. With that in mind, Dawlish is undergoing rapid change designed to raise standards and challenge any complacency. Students enter the college with average standards. In 2006, results in the national tests for Year 9 students showed that students made satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. However, because of a dip in the results in English, progress was unsatisfactory overall. Boys did particularly badly in their English reading examination. In response to these weak English results, there have been many changes to the provision in English, with a focus on improving boys' performance. English standards in the current Year 9 are now much higher although boys still do not achieve as well as girls. There was a notable increase in the number of students achieving 5A* - C grades at GCSE in 2006 and standards overall at the end of Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement from students' starting points in Year 7.

The overall personal development and well-being of students are good. Students clearly enjoy college; this is reflected in their good behaviour, positive attitudes and their above average attendance. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. This can be seen in the caring and thoughtful attitude of students and the positive atmosphere around the college. Most students understand the importance of leading healthy and active lifestyles because the college has involved them in decisions about such things as changes to the canteen food, and has worked hard to involve them in extra sporting and physical activities. The quality of care, guidance and level of support for students is good. Students receive clear guidance in areas such as personal, social, health and careers education. However, whilst student performance is closely tracked in Years 9 and 11 and students know their target grades and what to do to improve, in general the quality and frequency of assessment and guidance is not as good as it could be. Not all parents are happy with the quality of communications with the college and where there are concerns, they would like more ongoing information on their child's progress. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is clear evidence of the impact of college's drive to improve lessons by developing a more consistent approach to teaching. Clear learning objectives and efforts to involve students more actively in their own learning and assessment are major thrusts in that respect.

The good curriculum enables students of all abilities to follow courses that are best suited to their needs. The college's designation as a specialist technology college has led to a good focus on working with local schools and the community, together with a much improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT).

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The college is very well led by the headteacher, supported by an effective senior leadership team and supportive governing body. The college has identified correct priorities for improvement and there are clear signs that the many new initiatives are beginning to bear fruit. However, despite strengths in some departments, there are wide variations in students' performances across subjects. Not all departments are as rigorous as they could be in monitoring students' progress. In addition, in evaluating the school's overall effectiveness, too much emphasis has been placed upon the provision rather than the impact which provision is having on learning. As a result, the college evaluates overall effectiveness as good, rather than satisfactory as judged by the inspector. Although there are many positive things happening which are impacting on raising standards,

several key strategies are in their infancy. Until they are more firmly embedded, the college's capacity for improvement at this stage is judged to be satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the standard of boys' literacy, particularly reading
- improve the use of assessment so that students in all years know exactly how well they are doing against their targets, and precisely what they need to do to improve
- improve the monitoring and tracking of all students, so that the college knows exactly how well all students are doing in relation to their target grades, and communicate this more often and more effectively to parents
- improve the consistency and quality of leadership and management so that leaders at all levels take greater responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of performance. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards at the end of Year 9 are average and improving in all subjects. This represents satisfactory achievement. Students make better progress in mathematics and science than English. In the 2006 national tests, boys did much less well than girls in English, especially in terms of reading. However, as a result of strong leadership of the English department, changes to the curriculum, much closer monitoring of student performance and improvements to the teaching team, standards for the current Year 9 are now higher. Nonetheless, improving boys' literacy remains a significant challenge. At GCSE, standards are average, representing satisfactory achievement since Year 7. Students' progress accelerates during Years 10 and 11 and there has been an improving trend in the percentage of students who achieve 5 A* - C grades, with 61% achieving that level in 2006, the school's best ever performance. However, there are significant variations in performance between the subjects. There are many high performing subjects such as French, Spanish and mathematics but in a few such as resistant materials, ICT and history, students do not do as well as they should. Measures taken by the school, particularly through better monitoring, are leading to improvements in underperforming subjects. In design and technology, that is also allied to improved subject leadership. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make similar progress to other students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This is a strong aspect of the school's work and one which is appreciated by the vast majority of parents. Indeed, one parent summed up the general consensus by saying that 'staff are deeply committed to the well-being of my child and the whole staff offer opportunities beyond narrow academic ones'. Students' participation work in the arts, particularly drama, provides some excellent opportunities for developing creativity and their individuality, and for considering the world beyond themselves. They embrace these opportunities wholeheartedly.

Relationships within the college are good and staff and students treat one another with respect. Students enormously enjoy college and the range of activities on offer. They speak

enthusiastically about how much the college does for them; this is reflected in their pride in the school, good behaviour and the above average attendance rate.

Students make a good contribution to the life of the college and wider community. Year 11s, for example, support younger students and act as trained mediators to help resolve issues. The college council is certainly very active and students are confident in expressing their views in a mature way. Students understand how to keep healthy, and are safety-conscious around the college. They feel secure, and confident that any instances of bullying will be tackled firmly by staff. Students' social skills and their ability to work well independently and with others prepare them very well for the next stage of their education, as do the average standards for students overall. The weakness, despite being addressed, is in relation to aspects of literacy skills for some boys.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The variations in performance across the college and the overall satisfactory progress made by students reflect the satisfactory teaching students receive. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning in the college, and initiatives such as the learning forum, designed to spread best practice, are helping in that respect. The impact of this can be seen in the more consistent use of learning objectives within most lessons and a common approach to lesson planning which recognises the need to break lessons up into smaller and more manageable chunks to support learning. In English, classes are now arranged by ability and this, coupled with close monitoring of student and teacher performance, is helping to ensure that students are being more consistently and appropriately challenged.

In most lessons, behaviour is good and there are positive relationships between teachers and pupils which are based upon mutual respect. However, whilst teaching varies from outstanding through to the occasional inadequate lesson, in general there are a number of areas for improvement. Currently, the use of assessment is variable and it is not always made sufficiently clear to students what they need to do to improve. Whilst learning objectives are used in most lessons, there are still instances of where they are not challenging enough to ensure that all students achieve their best. In addition, questioning techniques used by teachers do not consistently challenge students to think deeply because they either require only a simple response or it is too easy for students to avoid answering.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Students of all abilities are given a rich and varied experience from a good curriculum. A particular strength of the curriculum is the variety of different pathways from Year 10 which enable students of all abilities to pursue courses which are ideally suited to their particular needs and interests. A good example of this is the provision for work-related learning which has had a major impact on the motivation and attendance of a group of disaffected students by giving them a mix of college and work-based learning. The college has introduced courses such as leisure and tourism which are well suited to the needs of the local economy. There is a good range of extra-curricular sports activities and many students profit in their personal development from undertaking junior sports leader's awards. The school has also achieved the Healthy Schools award in a number of areas such as emotional well being of students and sex

and relationship education. A good number of students take part enthusiastically in the many lunchtime and after-college activities such as the 'Big Foot' drama classes, the UK maths challenge and a host of musical workshops. The improvements in provision in English to help those underachieving in literacy are beginning to 'bite' and such measures are adding significantly to the quality of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Pastoral care in particular is outstanding. Students feel safe on the campus and are confident that there is always someone they can go to if they have problems. Child protection and vetting procedures are robust and this means that vulnerable students are very well supported. Liaison with outside agencies is very effective, so that all students and their families can access the individual help that they need. Any instances of bullying are handled effectively.

However, whilst students receive very good and clear guidance about health and well-being and their future career options, the systems for providing academic feedback are not as strong. Whilst students in Years 9 and 11 receive good guidance about their targets and what they need to do to improve, too many students in other years do not have the same level of understanding of exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The introduction of interim reports, piloted in Year 7 this year, is designed to address the concern which some parents have about the quality of ongoing information about their child's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the college are satisfactory, the impact of which is seen in the satisfactory progress made by the students. The new headteacher, supported by an effective team of senior leaders and a highly supportive governing body, is successfully implementing an improvement agenda. The vision for improving Dawlish is very clear and has been widely shared. There is evidence of change throughout the college. The senior leadership know the college's strengths and they are fully aware of where it needs to improve. There are some effective heads of department who rigorously follow college procedures and monitor the work of students and staff. In these departments, students make good progress. However, this level of rigour is not consistent across the college and that is a significant factor in some wide variations in performance. Nevertheless, the college is beginning to set challenging targets for students and there are clear signs that this is leading to greater progress in a number of subjects. Steps taken to strengthen the teaching team in English are leading to a much sharper focus on learning. The further reorganisation of the college's leadership structure, with new key stage leaders to be appointed from September 2007, is also a step in the right direction in aiming to improve the consistency of academic monitoring across all years. Although good features in the college are resulting in an improvement in standards overall, there are still gaps and some key strategies are still in their infancy.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 May 2007

Dear Students

Dawlish Community College, Elm Grove Road, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 0BY

I greatly enjoyed spending time in your college. Thank you all very much for the open and frank way that you spoke to me. Many of your parents and carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and I also took your views and concerns into account when making my judgements. You told me about the things you like, what you feel the college does well and the improvements and changes that you have witnessed.

I believe that Dawlish is a satisfactory college with many good features. The results that you achieve are average at GCSE and are improving as a result of the hard work of both students and staff. Much is going on at your college and I am glad that so many of you take the opportunity to get so involved. There is a real sense of community in the college, and I was particularly impressed with the way that older students look after the younger ones through peer mediation. The mature and responsible attitude of the Year 11s I spoke to was particularly pleasing to see. You are well cared for and there is a good range of subjects for you to follow. It is important for colleges to work with the local community so that you can gain experiences that will help you after you leave college; this is something that your college does well. I think that the standard of teaching is satisfactory, although I agree with you that not all teachers make their lessons interesting and enjoyable.

I have asked the college to do a few key things to help it improve. Firstly, to do more to improve your reading and writing skills, particularly for the boys, so that English results in Year 9 will be higher. Secondly, the college should make sure that your progress is very closely checked so that at regular intervals, you and your parents know exactly how well you are doing. Finally, to improve the quality of assessment in lessons so that in every subject you know precisely what you need to do to reach the higher grades.

I believe that by doing these things, Dawlish will become an even better college. Once again, thank you all very much for talking to me. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Hancock (Lead inspector)