

Oakmead College of Technology

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113881
Local Authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	311418
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1299
Sixth form	186
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	19
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tina Waterman
Headteacher	Annetta Minard
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	9 July 2008
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Duck Lane Bournemouth BH11 9JJ
Telephone number	01202 774600
Fax number	01202 774627

Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The college has had specialist technology status since 2001, and full service extended school status since 2005. It is a very large secondary modern school, operating in an area of academic selection with single sex and faith schools nearby. It serves an area of relative socio-economic disadvantage. Nearly all students are White British. The proportion of students identified by the college as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that seen nationally, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is relatively small. A small number of children are in the care of the local authority. The college has achieved the Sports Mark Silver award, the Healthy Schools award and the Silver Arts Mark. The Governing Body has had overall responsibility for the management of an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provided by the on-site nursery since April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oakmead Technology College provides its students with a satisfactory education. It has some important strengths, particularly in the sixth form, but there are also some areas which require improvement, including provision in the attached nursery. The specialist status in technology has been used well to raise standards in the college.

Students' attainment when they start at the college is generally below average, particularly in terms of the proportion of students reaching the higher National Curriculum levels in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. In the past a sizeable minority of students have underachieved, particularly in English, and in 2007 the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was 29%. The college has taken effective steps to personalise the curriculum even further and to provide additional care and support. Although standards are still below average, this represents satisfactory achievement. The students who have a learning difficulty and/or disability make satisfactory progress because of the good quality support they get in class from staff, and because work and courses are carefully tailored to meet their needs and interests. Students who are gifted or talented do well because of the way the college ensures that the curriculum meets their needs.

Notwithstanding the improvements made to achievement so far, students' progress is not yet good because improvements to teaching have focused on provision rather than learning outcomes. What this means in practice is that although some aspects of teaching – such as planning, classroom management and the use of resources – are good, the methods used are too teacher-led and do not sufficiently promote independent learning. Some lessons also lack pace. As a result the students, some of whom are reluctant learners and need an extra stimulus, remain in their comfort zone. Students generally behave well and they say that they enjoy college life. In spite of all the college's best efforts the attendance rate is still below average. Strategies such as responding to parents about absence on a daily basis, rewarding good attendance, and having more direct contact with students to emphasise the importance of good attendance on achievement have had a small positive impact. Some students do not attend promptly and regularly enough, and the quality of their education is impaired because of this.

Students eat healthily and increasingly the canteen is serving healthy food. The breakfast club is used well by students as a social centre and also provides a calm start to the day. Students say they feel safe, and that any rare incidents such as bullying are dealt with well. A particular feature that is appreciated by students is the RAISE (restorative approaches in the college environment) Centre, and they report that it helps to settle issues quickly. There is a good appreciation of safety procedures and there are good risk assessments in the college and sixth form.

Leadership and management are satisfactory in the college, good in the sixth form and inadequate for the nursery. The strategy and systems for improvement are well considered, but have not yet had sufficiently sustained impact. The college uses its resources effectively: its nursery is an important aspect of teacher recruitment and retention, a community facility and a 14–19 training venue for students taking vocational and child-related courses. However, governance is inadequate because the governors and senior leaders in the college have not taken a sufficiently active role in terms of their responsibility for the EYFS provision as the outdoor provision and ICT facilities are not fit for purpose. In addition, governors have not

been in a position to challenge and help the college improve because they do not have an accurate view of standards and achievement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is a very important part of the college, providing further education chances and choices for young people who otherwise may not continue with their education or training, and these students make good progress. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and self-evaluation is regular and accurate. Assessment procedures are good and are used carefully to track students' progress against their targets. This has resulted in students nearly always following courses that are carefully tailored to individual needs, capabilities and areas of interest. Retention rates on courses are good and the number of students joining the sixth form is growing.

Sixth form students contribute well to the life of the college and the community. Students speak highly of the support and guidance they receive to help ensure that they follow the right path for them, both at college and afterwards.

College unvalidated data shows that in 2008 there was a 100% pass rate at A2 level, and half of these were at grade C or above. For these students and the others following level 2 and level 3 courses that year (and the previous year) this represented particularly high achievement and demonstrates the very good value for money that the sixth form provides and its annually increasing impact on the life chances of its students.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The routine management of the nursery by the manager and her staff is satisfactory, and ensures the children are well cared for on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, the college and its governors have not ensured that overall provision is adequate. The facilities for outdoor play are too limited and present some health and safety concerns. Provision for this aspect of learning is inadequate despite the very best efforts of the nursery staff team. An example of the inadequacy is that the uneven surface of the outdoor play area means that ride-on toys can rarely be used. In addition, although children have some opportunity to use electronic or remote controlled toys, overall provision for developing early skills in ICT is again inadequate and this does not reflect the college technology status. Consequently, children are not effectively supported in their learning and development.

Adults in the nursery are well trained and qualified. The child to adult ratios are good and both babies and toddlers were observed enjoying stimulating activities such as investigating foam, playing musical instruments and singing. In spite of the inadequacies, this ensures that the children's personal development and their general progress across the different areas of learning are satisfactory, and their social development is a particular strength. Assessment of children's progress is thorough and undertaken on a regular basis.

Although there are some pleasant displays and role-play areas, this aspect is underdeveloped and insufficient attention has been given to creating a rich and colourful internal and external learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor and ICT provision in the nursery to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that lessons provide more challenge, so that more students make better progress and a higher proportion achieve five or more grades A*-C, including mathematics and English, when they leave the college.
- Ensure that governors can fulfil their role as critical friends.

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

The achievement of the vast majority of students is satisfactory in relation to their capabilities and starting points, and there are no significant variations in the performance of different groups of learners, for example by gender, ethnicity or ability.

In 2007 students' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 was good in mathematics, satisfactory in science and inadequate in English. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was 29%. The college's 2008 unvalidated test data shows that it just missed its target to increase this proportion. Nevertheless, achievement in English has improved and is now satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, the college targets for English were met with 59% of students gaining Level 5 or above in the national tests. At Key Stage 4, although the college met its own target there was no rise in the proportion of students attaining grade C and above at GCSE in English. Inspection evidence shows that students' progress in mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4 continues to be faster than the satisfactory progress seen in English and science, and standards in English, mathematics and science remain below those seen nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The college has addressed cultural, moral and social issues well. Students feel well supported by the staff, who they find constructively helpful, and they appreciate the appointment of a college chaplain. Students are part of the local community and are very involved with local support agencies. The college also ensures that they have a sound awareness of their responsibilities within the wider world. Students' behaviour is good in classrooms and around the college more generally.

Most students enjoy their education. However, the rate of authorised absence remains too high. The college reports that this is due to parents/carers taking their children on holiday during term-time. This has a negative impact on the learning of these students and reduces their future life chances because they are less likely to gain a sufficient number of good grades at GCSE to access education and employment when they leave the college. Students serve as college council members and some as peer mediators. There are limited opportunities for many students to take other responsibility in the college. Citizenship and enterprise activities have improved considerably since the last inspection, and in these areas students develop economic

awareness skills that prepare them well for their future lives. Literacy and numeracy skills, however, continue to be too limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons with an effective structure and to explain concepts and facts clearly, often with good use of the interactive whiteboards. Relationships with students are good, resulting in good behaviour, and this encourages a good learning atmosphere.

Many students find learning challenging and a number of teachers find it difficult to enthuse them. This inevitably limits their progress. The teaching style is often fairly strongly teacher-led, and the students, especially lower attaining ones, find this comforting. However, it does not provide the impetus for them to make the strides forward that they need to, particularly in developing the capacity for independent learning. As a result, although some aspects of teaching are good, the overall progress made by the students is satisfactory.

In most lessons teachers provide a clear context for learning through review of past work and clear objectives for the lesson. They take account of what the students know and understand and build on that, but in many lessons there are insufficient checks on the students' understanding of the tasks set or of concepts and ideas being considered. As a result the pace of learning is often too slow. Assessment data is collected regularly and collated so that teachers have a good understanding of the progress that their students are making and interventions can be made where they are not meeting targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall, the quality of the curriculum is good. It has some outstanding aspects that are driving forward improvements in the rest of the college. For example, the project work in the lower college provides very well for the limited literacy skills of incoming students. Again, the college is exceptionally flexible in meeting the needs of a wide range of students for whom the mainstream education is not appropriate. This is done through dedicated provision and arrangements with outside agencies, for example in work-related activities. The curriculum responds well to local needs by providing appropriate courses. The range of choices in Years 10 and 11 is good, although the take-up of modern foreign languages is low. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because work is adapted for them and they get extra support when needed. ICT is used well in a wide range of subjects to enhance learning. It is used particularly well in design and technology. There is a very wide range of additional out-of-college activities to enhance learning, and additional classes to improve learning in key subject areas. Good strategies to raise standards of literacy have been introduced, but are unevenly applied across the college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The college works hard at retaining all students, and exclusion rates are low. Through good processes of support and using contacts with outside agencies, most students' needs are

accommodated well through personalised programmes. Some students benefit from support through the RAISE Centre and through the Student Support Centre. The support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, with a well-organised structure and an integration programme to pass students back into mainstream education. The college works hard with other agencies to ensure that all are cared for within the college as far as possible. A few students who have home tuition are monitored closely and, when appropriate, can re-enter the college. The college complies with all legal requirements for safeguarding, including necessary staff checks, although the outdoor provision in the nursery is not subject to the same rigorous level of health and safety assessment.

Students know their targets and most know how to improve and make progress. The six-weekly cycle of monitoring is liked by students, and they feel it helps them to make progress. Year managers and learning coordinators are available to support them and their parents, and this is valued. However, the pattern of assessment across the college is inconsistent and marking is variable in quality. Some marking is clear and helpful, but some does not take place regularly enough and does not always show the students how they can improve their work.

The quality of information, advice and guidance on transition and careers is good and students have a well-structured programme to help them in their choices for Key Stage 4, when they join the sixth form and to prepare them to leave the college.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and her senior staff have instigated clear structures within which staff and students can improve standards and achievement and a number of areas of work have improved appreciably during the past two years. However, these strategies are not yet having a sustained impact on increasing students' achievement annually, particularly in maths and English at GCSE. Self-evaluation is undertaken at all levels in the college, but too often it does not associate the good structures, processes and intentions seen with specific learning outcomes. For example, analysis of performance across the college is undertaken as an aspect of the self-review cycle but it was not effective in preventing the significant drop in levels of achievement in English in summer 2007, or in responding to it sufficiently well over 2007/8. Consequently, the college's view of its own strengths and weaknesses tends to be overgenerous, even though priorities for improvement are correctly identified and feed appropriately into action plans and development plans.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The ethos promotes high rates of inclusion, and the quality of responsiveness to the curricular needs of the students, together with the good care advice and guidance provided on an individual basis, secures good and increasingly better progress in this area of the college.

Although very supportive of the school, governors do not have an accurate view of standards and achievement in the college and are therefore unable to exercise the appropriate degree of challenge to assist the headteacher and senior staff in improving standards and achievement. They have also not taken a sufficiently active role in their responsibility for the provision of the EYFS, which is inadequate.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	4	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	4	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	4	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	4	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Students

Inspection of Oakmead Technology College, Bournemouth, BH11 9JJ

We would like to thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us recently when we inspected your college. We particularly appreciated the discussions that we had with many of you and are grateful to you for helping us with our work. In return, I want to let you know of the inspection findings so that you can see for yourselves what we thought, although you can always read the full report yourselves at www.ofsted.gov.uk. We judged the school to be satisfactory overall, with some strengths but some important weaknesses.

- An increasingly wide range of options at Key Stage 4 enables you to follow academic or vocational courses. Staff help you very well to choose which ones would suit you best.
- In spite of some good teaching, you are not always encouraged enough to develop your independent learning skills.
- Some of you still do not do as well as you could in your learning, because you do not come to school often enough and take holidays in term time.
- You behave well and you are aware of how to live in healthy and safe ways.
- Staff care for you well and you use the RAISE Centre and Student Support Centre effectively.
- Students in the sixth form generally follow the right courses for them and make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Governors need to know more about how well you are doing so that they can help staff make improvements.

To help more of you get five GCSEs at grades A* to C (including mathematics and English) we have asked the college to make sure that your teachers challenge you more, so you can be more independent in lessons.

To the children of Little Oaks Nursery Thank you for making us welcome when we came to see you. We thought that you played very nicely with each other and that the grown ups make sure you are happy. Although you enjoy being at the nursery and are improving your skills and knowledge, we have asked the people in charge to make some improvements by providing more technological toys and making the outdoor play area much better. Thank you again for being so polite and helpful during the visit. We hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best. We wish you all a happy and successful future. Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector