

Huxlow Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122053
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314205
Inspection date	6 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Champak Chauhan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	725
6th form	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Kelby
Headteacher	Michael Malton
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Finedon Road Irthlingborough Wellingborough NN9 5TY
Telephone number	01933 650496
Fax number	01933 653435

Age group	11-18
Inspection date	6 November 2007
Inspection number	314205

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, including the college's recent performance in English and information and communication technology (ICT); personal development and well-being; and the quality of provision, including assessment and target setting. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, a scrutiny of students' work and discussions with students, staff and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, including the college's recent performance in English and information and communication technology (ICT); personal development and well-being; and the quality of provision, including assessment and target setting. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, a scrutiny of students' work and discussions with students, staff and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Huxlow Science College is a smaller than average secondary school. It serves a very mixed area which includes some significant deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is significantly higher than the national average. Relatively few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college gained specialist status in science in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of Huxlow Science College is good and it has many outstanding features. The college is a harmonious and caring community that is strongly supported by its parents. This is exemplified by one parent who said, 'We have nothing but praise for how our son is developing both academically and personally... he thoroughly enjoys attending school', while another stated that Huxlow is '... a lovely school that I would recommend to anyone'. The college has significantly improved the achievement of its students over the last few years and they make good and sometimes excellent progress from ages 11 to 16, although this varies between subjects. This results from the good teaching and learning, which have outstanding features. Staff work hard, plan their lessons in detail and have realistically high expectations of all students. Lessons are characterised by excellent attitudes to learning and a productive working environment. Students enjoy their learning and many respond well to their teachers' questioning in lessons. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and they use this well to extend the students' knowledge and understanding. The brisk pace to the learning, with appropriate challenge for the various abilities, coaxes at least good progress out of all students. The effective teaching and learning are rooted in a good curriculum. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports, enriches its quality. The small size of the college and the accompanying financial constraints mean that a wider range of subjects cannot always be offered. However, the science specialism has had a significant impact on improving provision across the college. Other departments emulate its good practice and both students and staff speak highly of its successes. The college has diversified its offer at Key Stage 4 by increasing the range of vocational options. There are plans to expand this provision in the near future in partnership with other schools and the two local colleges of further education. Partly as a result of the above factors, achievement and standards are good, with outstanding features. Students start the college at age 11 with attainment that is below average in English and science, and well below in mathematics. At Key Stage 3, results in science are consistently outstanding, while they are good in mathematics. Results in English, however, declined substantially in 2006. Standards in 2007 improved but still lagged behind those in mathematics and science. At GCSE, the proportion attaining at least five grades A* to C was slightly above national averages in 2005 and 2006 but fell in 2007 to about average. Achievement in mathematics and science was high but performance in English fell from that in 2006, largely as a result of staffing issues which were beyond the college's control. Results in ICT are not as high as in many other subjects. Standards are rising again but, in the weaker areas, are not yet back to the levels of two years ago. The achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding because of the high quality of support that they receive. Students' achievement is strong also because the staff meet their needs so well and, consequently, the students say they are happy. One stated, 'This school is welcoming and I feel proud to be part of it,' while another said, 'It is a nice environment to work in.' All students are valued and their care, support and guidance are outstanding. Students speak highly of how the pastoral system is effective in meeting their needs. They value the fact that staff treat them with respect and are always willing to help with any kind of problem, either academic or personal. There are excellent links with outside agencies. The students' academic guidance is strongly rooted in a comprehensive system of assessment and target setting. This system is rigorously implemented and regularly evaluated by all managers. The outstanding care, support and guidance lead to outstanding personal development and well-being. The students' behaviour is exemplary and their overall attendance rate has markedly improved since the start of the current academic year. Students say there

are hardly any cases of bullying and when these occur the staff swiftly deal with them. Some parents verified this as well. Students are strongly aware of adopting safe practices and healthier lifestyles. Many undertake additional responsibilities in the college, for example, as prefects and ambassadors. They feel that the staff act upon any sensible suggestions for improvement they make through the school council. They are prepared well for their future economic well-being, although links with business and enterprise are limited because of the restricted range of industry and commerce in the locality. The students' moral and social development is good but their cultural awareness is less strong. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's strong and decisive leadership has had a significant impact since his arrival two years ago. He is consistently focused on meeting the needs of all students, sets high standards, both for staff and students, and has successfully steered the college towards better performance. He has been helped in this by a cohesive and supportive senior leadership team that shares the same ideals. Senior leaders have ensured through their close links with departments and pastoral teams that provision for students continues to improve. Middle managers have been made more accountable for improving standards and quality. Mediocrity is not tolerated. This unrelenting drive towards college improvement has ensured that students' progress in most subjects has improved in recent years and has been excellent in some of them. The thorough scrutiny of the school's work and the decisive action to remedy weakness have helped the school through its recent staffing difficulties and both standards and achievement are moving up once more. Governance is outstanding. Governors have an acute insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the college, and hold it to account.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and it has some outstanding features. The sixth form has expanded considerably in recent years, reflecting its popularity. Leadership and management are excellent, as is the system of care, guidance and support. This includes a thorough system of assessment and target setting which is valued by the students and which enables them to accelerate their progress. Although numbers are relatively small, they achieve well in their AS and A level examinations in relation to their starting points. Recent results in both examinations have been above national averages. Teaching is reported to be good, although one or two areas are given additional support. Opportunities for students to study various courses are significantly enhanced through the consortium arrangements with other local schools and institutions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English and in ICT through improved teaching and learning.

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
---	----------------	-------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	IE ²
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- 7 November 2007 Dear Students Inspection of Huxlow Science College, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN9 5TY Thank you for welcoming me to Huxlow recently. I enjoyed meeting and talking with many of you and I would like to state below what I thought about your college. Strengths
- The overall effectiveness of Huxlow Science College is good, with many outstanding features.
- Staff are hard working and they care for you. They teach you well and this enables all of you to make good and sometimes excellent progress. The science specialism has an important impact on the standards you achieve and on other subjects in the college.
- The quality of care, support and guidance, and your personal development and well-being, are outstanding. Some of you and your parents told me this was the case and I am happy to agree with that. Your behaviour is exemplary.
- Leadership and management of the college are outstanding. Your headteacher and other senior leaders lead the college extremely well. They, other staff and the governors ensure that the college continues to improve. As one of you said to me, 'This school is getting better and better every week.' Areas for improvement
- Standards in English and ICT are not as high as they could be. Once again, many thanks for welcoming me into your college. I wish you all the best for your future. Mr C Chauhan Her Majesty's Inspector

7 November 2007



Dear Students

**Inspection of Huxlow Science College, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough,
Northamptonshire NN9 5TY**

Thank you for welcoming me to Huxlow recently. I enjoyed meeting and talking with many of you and I would like to state below what I thought about your college.

Strengths

- The overall effectiveness of Huxlow Science College is good, with many outstanding features.
- Staff are hard working and they care for you. They teach you well and this enables all of you to make good and sometimes excellent progress. The science specialism has an important impact on the standards you achieve and on other subjects in the college.
- The quality of care, support and guidance, and your personal development and well-being, are outstanding. Some of you and your parents told me this was the case and I am happy to agree with that. Your behaviour is exemplary.
- Leadership and management of the college are outstanding. Your headteacher and other senior leaders lead the college extremely well. They, other staff and the governors ensure that the college continues to improve. As one of you said to me, 'This school is getting better and better every week.'

Areas for improvement

- Standards in English and ICT are not as high as they could be.

Once again, many thanks for welcoming me into your college.
I wish you all the best for your future.

Mr C Chauhan
Her Majesty's Inspector