

King Edward VI Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113520
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325834
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1,785
Sixth form	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rick Gaehl
Principal	Mr Stephen Jones
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 April 2006
School address	Ashburton Road Totnes Devon TQ9 5JX
Telephone number	01803 869200
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the college's self-evaluation documentation, governors' minutes, external reports, college publications and 291 parental questionnaires.

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

- the attainment and progress of students
- the extent to which all groups of students feel fully included and well supported within the school community (including in the sixth form)
- the extent to which leaders at every level set clear direction (including the sixth form)
- how well students are prepared for life in modern Britain (including the sixth form).

Information about the school

In 2002, King Edward VI was designated a performing arts specialist college. Situated in a stunning location, it serves the local community of Totnes and large rural hinterland. Some students travel from Torbay. The vast majority of students are White British. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above the national average and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is a little below average.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

King Edward VI provides a satisfactory standard of education. This is largely because, while many aspects of its work and outcomes for students are at least good and sometimes outstanding, the attainment of students and the rate at which they make progress is, overall, similar to that found nationally. There exist inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, academic guidance, management of behaviour and in the monitoring of these areas. This results in the students receiving an uneven education, the quality of which depends very much on who teaches them. Parental opinion endorses this view.

Some outcomes for students are outstanding. Students' understanding of potential risk, coupled with the mature and sensible relationships students have with one another, lead the vast majority of students to feel very safe. The college has created many opportunities for students to contribute to the college, local, national and international community and this is excellent. Related to these opportunities, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The college makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion, not least through the outstanding links and partnerships with local organisations. These strongly promote students' learning and well-being. Performing Arts status has been a major influence in promoting the global dimension and in bringing innovation to the curriculum. GCSE results in the performing arts subjects are very strong.

So, much of the work of the college is at least good. Students do really well in developing as mature, well-rounded individuals prepared for adult life. However, while academic results nationally have been rising in recent years, results in the college have plateaued so that, while at the time of the last inspection attainment was above average, overall attainment is now only a little above average. The college would contend that this is because the national increase has to some extent been brought about by a larger uptake of vocational courses in other schools. Whatever the reasons, and while there is evidence to suggest that college results will rise this summer, the current situation is that attainment is broadly average. With standards on entry to the college being broadly average, overall students make satisfactory progress. This continues in the sixth form.

The principal, who is soon to retire, has over 12 years, created a very special learning environment; the college is a happy and friendly place. He has made many changes and introduced initiatives. For example, the new Year 7 curriculum, while

not universally popular with students and parents, is having a positive impact on attitudes to learning and behaviour. The introduction in the sixth form of the international baccalaureate from September builds on this educational vision. Once issues are identified, robust and rapid action is taken to successfully address them; for example the recent successful action to improve attendance.

Senior leaders have identified underperforming subjects and taken good action to bring about improvement. The college has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, it has been insufficiently challenging of academic progress when considered against national rather than local benchmarks. This understanding, together with good and excellent outcomes in many areas of the college's work, gives solid evidence of the college's good capacity for further improvement. The same energy that has brought about recent improvement in many areas now needs to be applied to the raising of academic standards so that all students meet their full potential.

A small proportion of 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise academic achievement through teaching that consistently displays high aspirations for all students and groups of students.
- Improve the consistency of monitoring to ensure that the best practice found in many areas of the college's work is implemented by all staff.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In the summer 2008 examinations, 66% of students gained five or more GCSE passes at the highest grades, while 53% gained at least five highest grade passes including English and mathematics. This is broadly in line with the attainment of this age group nationally. While in many subjects students' attainment is very high, overall measures of value added show that students' achievement is broadly average. The very strong provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities results in these students making good progress. Lesson observations by inspectors showed that while there was good learning in over half of the lessons visited, in too many, the progress of students was only satisfactory. This was disappointing because students behave very well and create a learning environment where as long as the teaching interests the students, they set to work readily. Exclusions are very low. The 'behaviour for learning' initiative is having a very positive impact. Relationships between students and between staff and students are a real strength of the college. There is an orderly and calm atmosphere where

students are happy and considerate to others. Some concerns were expressed by parents regarding behaviour on buses.

Students take part in a wide range of healthy activities. They make a very positive contribution to the life of their college. Through the 'student voice', they are increasingly bringing about change to aspects of their college. They are aware of different cultures and economic situations and raise money for local and international concerns. The college is at the heart of the local community and students engage in joint ventures. They are prepared well for their future economic well-being through developing work-based skills and developing financial capability and enterprise skills. Work experience could be used more effectively.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers often use a variety of strategies to aid learning. Good questioning was observed which challenged students' thinking. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and teaching is often well focused on examination requirements. However, common weaknesses were that while the school is rich in data on students' performance, this is not used by individual teachers to plan work that is appropriate for the needs of different groups within classes. Less successful lessons lacked pace or any sense of urgency. The quality and quantity of marking is too variable so students too often lack advice on how to improve.

The curriculum is innovative and is proving successful in developing thinking skills. In Years 7 and 8, further development is needed to make the content more stimulating. In Years 10 and 11, a variety of pathways, including vocational routes, meet the

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

needs of different groups. After-school activities are varied and popular. The Saturday music school and links with Falmouth School of Art are excellent examples of excellent partnership work to enhance the provision, especially in the arts curriculum.

This is an inclusive college which values each student and personalises support. There are very strong and extensive links with a wide range of professionals which lead to very effective care and support for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Strategies used to address attendance, and in particular persistent absence, have brought about significant improvement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders express their vision for the school with passion and provide an education for their students that is wide reaching and develops essential skills well. While the college leadership has high expectations of all its students, this is not always shared by all staff. The governors share this vision and hold the college to account with challenge for underachievement. However, while governance is generally good, governors had failed to supervise adequately in one vital area of their responsibility. Government requirements for safeguarding are now in place and robust. The school has a strong track record of promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

Middle leaders are held to account, but the consistency with which this is done varies. The management structure works well in some areas, but there needs to be more rigour in ensuring consistency in all aspects of management. Pastoral outcomes are good resulting from a drive to produce a well-rounded education. This includes the college's excellent contribution to community cohesion. The college works exceptionally closely with the local community. Given its geographical position it is doing all that is reasonable to extend its students' experience of life in modern Britain and develop their understanding of different cultures and economic circumstances around the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The leadership has a good vision for the sixth form. Based on rigorous analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, key roles have been modified to ensure a more rapid pace of change. There exist very good links with local partners to support students across a range of areas, particularly in the arts. The 'student voice' has played a part in developing the curriculum and improving provision.

Attainment is broadly in line with that found nationally, as is the rate of students' progress. The value added in terms of academic achievement has been falling but there is evidence to suggest that the decline has been arrested. Good use has been made of data, but the targets set for students are not aspirational enough. As in the main school, other outcomes are better than academic achievement. For example, around two thirds of students are involved in giving back to the community across a wide range of activities including mentoring or work for various charities.

Teaching is good. There have been improvements since the last inspection and this has accelerated recently. A parent wrote that she wanted Ofsted to know 'how impressed we have been with Kevicc since my daughter joined the sixth form after her time at a local grammar school . . . She has blossomed and has had opportunities and teaching which, I do feel, she would not have had at other schools.' The curriculum is good and continues to develop, and is modified to meet the needs of individual students. There is very good provision of a wide range of visits and extra-curricular activities. The care and support given are very good but guidance could be improved further. Target setting and its use to challenge students' progress is inconsistent.

Inspectors agree with a student who commented that 'it is a great place to learn here ... it is nice and relaxed'. Recent changes are bringing improvement but the impact has not yet been seen in raised attainment.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A relatively low number of questionnaires were returned by parents. Concerns were raised regarding communication, the consistency of application of policies, and a perceived lack of challenge. Comments often provided a fair balance of strengths and weaknesses. Parents commented favourably on the progress their children are making and how much they enjoy school. Parents were positive about how well the school responds to pastoral concerns and especially the care and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The extra-curricular provision was regarded favourably.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at King Edward VI Community College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 291 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 1820 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	121	161	29	9

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



15 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of King Edward VI Community College, Totnes, TQ9 5JX

Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

We have judged the overall effectiveness of your college to be satisfactory. Many aspects of the work of the college are either good or outstanding. This is especially true of your personal well-being. Your understanding of potential risk, coupled with your mature and sensible relationships with one another, lead the vast majority of you to feel very safe. The college has created many opportunities for you to contribute to the college, local, national and international community and this is excellent. Related to these opportunities, your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The college makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion, not least through the outstanding links and partnerships with local organisations.

The college has been less successful in ensuring that the quality of your learning is always as good as it could be. While we know that the college is a very pleasant place to study, you could be challenged to make better progress. At the moment, the progress you make in academic subjects is similar to that of average students nationally and we are sure you can do better. You told us that some teachers have higher expectations of you and your work than some other teachers. How well you do seems to depend too much on which teachers you have. We are asking you to work with your teachers to do this. We are also asking the college leaders to help you by:

- Improving the consistency of monitoring to ensure that the best practice found in many areas of the college's work is implemented by all staff.
- Improving your academic achievement through teaching that consistently displays high aspirations for all of you.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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