

# Okehampton College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113540
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	325841
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Grahame Sherfield HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1393
Sixth form	229
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Courtney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Daryll Chapman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Mill Road Okehampton EX20 1PW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01837 650910
<b>Fax number</b>	01837 650918

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following:

- how successfully the college is improving achievement and standards in English in Key Stages 3 and 4
- with what success the college is improving teaching and learning in the sixth form to raise achievement, particularly at A level
- the impact of more vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form on students' achievement
- the effectiveness of the college's systems for checking standards and progress.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising students' work and teachers' planning, discussions with students and staff and analysing the views of parents and the college's documentation. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

Okehampton College is of above average size and has high performing specialist status for technology and applied learning. It serves students from Okehampton and the large rural area surrounding the town. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average. The range includes those with specific learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs, moderate learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorder. Most students are White British and speak English as their first language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Okehampton is a good and rapidly improving college. The governors, the principal and the staff have created an outstandingly caring and supportive community where students flourish and develop as individuals. One parent reported being 'exceptionally pleased with all aspects of the college' while another praised 'the varied opportunities offered and the pastoral care given'. A third praised 'the positive atmosphere of a school which is improving its standards and achievement'. Inspectors fully agree with these views, which are representative of the large majority of parents and carers.

Joining the college with broadly average standards, students make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 9, they attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of students who achieve five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has improved steadily and was above the national average in 2008. The college's data indicate that students are on track to achieve similar standards in 2009. The specialist status subjects make a very positive contribution to improving standards. Progress in mathematics has been consistently good but in English it has been more variable. Students have made satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 11 but progress has fluctuated in Key Stage 4, and GCSE students last year made unsatisfactory progress. The college has been working successfully to address this issue by revising planning, identifying slower progress more rapidly and ensuring that staff work more coherently as a team. As a result, students' progress in English has accelerated and it is now good. Boys' progress overall is slightly above that achieved in similar schools nationally while the girls make better progress than this. The college has been working to improve boys' progress for several years using a range of approaches, including adapting planning and introducing shorter and more focused activities, and has achieved some success in narrowing the gap.

Students' progress is good because of the good teaching they receive. Typically, lessons are well planned, and engaging activities ensure that most students are motivated. Students value the support they receive from their teachers, particularly the extra opportunities that are provided outside normal lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they have high expectations of the standards that students should reach. Occasionally, in some lessons observed, activities were given too much time and the pace of learning then slowed. The curriculum addresses well the needs of students from a rural area. Many enrichment activities offer opportunities to travel further afield and to learn new skills, and these make an important contribution to raising students' self-esteem and their aspirations for the future. There is a strong commitment to widening provision to meet the needs of those who learn best in more practical activities, as the school's additional specialism in applied learning demonstrates. Some vocational courses are already in place, with great success achieved in information and communication technology for example, with more courses planned for September 2009, and planning for a new skills centre on the college site is at an advanced stage. Students have many opportunities to write in subjects other than English but these are not yet planned systematically across the college.

An atmosphere of good humour and mutual goodwill pervades the college and students' behaviour is excellent. They get on very well together and, within such a positive environment, they feel very safe and greatly enjoy their learning and the wider life of the college. Students make an effective contribution to decision making through the student council and enjoy the varied opportunities to take on responsibilities, work collaboratively and support each other,

particularly through the tutor groups which are organised to include students from each year. Students are very well cared for as the college is rigorous in its attention to their welfare. Outstanding arrangements to smooth the transition from primary school are much appreciated by parents and students alike. Students rightly value the excellent tutoring and mentoring systems that support their academic progress and wider development. In some subjects, students are beginning to become involved in assessing their own work and identifying for themselves how to improve. The college rightly intends to develop this further. Collaboration with a range of outside agencies makes an important contribution to the high quality support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this helps them to achieve well. Vulnerable students benefit from outstanding support from the Mill Leat Centre which includes activities and clubs at lunchtimes. Arrangements for safeguarding and for health and safety meet requirements.

There is a clear vision for future development of the college that is shared by the governing body, the principal, senior staff and other leaders and managers. The principal provides a strong lead in implementing the carefully designed plans that underpin this while also taking a direct interest in the learning of individual students and supporting a wide range of college events. His commitment is recognised and valued by both parents and students. The governing body provides outstanding challenge and support and fulfils its role very well. Systems for monitoring the progress of students and the work of the faculties are excellent. Heads of faculty play a key role in evaluating their subject areas. As a result of these systems, the college has a very accurate view of its strengths and areas for improvement. Although, there has not yet been sufficient time for the outstanding leadership and management to have their full impact on students' achievement, the rapid success in improving progress in English demonstrates that the capacity to improve further is outstanding.

The college makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It is very successful in engaging its students, and exceptional in building links within the Okehampton Learning Community and the local community as a whole, where both the governors and the specialist status make important contributions. The college has the International School Award and good links with schools overseas as well as with others in contrasting areas in Britain.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the sixth form has improved as a wider range of courses is now in place to meet the needs of students for whom academic courses are not the most suitable. These courses meet students' needs well, as is shown by the large numbers who complete them successfully. They play a key part in keeping students involved in learning and preparing further for their working lives. The legacy of narrower provision was that some students struggled with more academic courses and, as a result, A Level results in 2008 were below average. There is clear evidence that progress on academic courses has accelerated and is now good. College data indicate that AS students this year are likely to exceed national averages and A Level results are likely to be broadly average. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. A detailed review in the autumn of 2008 resulted in clear priorities for further improvement, particularly enhancing students' commitment to their learning. Good progress has been made. More frequent checks on progress are well established and take place each month in conjunction with tutorial sessions. Students value this very good partnership with their tutors and the excellent support they receive from their teachers generally. They have responded very well to the improvements and make the most of the good teaching they receive. Opportunities for

students to be closely involved in improving the sixth form are excellent and students rise to the challenge, resulting in the 'student in difficulty' scheme, for example. Students organise regular social events and charity fundraising for themselves through the post-16 committee. Some students support the college very well in its work with primary schools, in extra-curricular activities and in acting as mentors for younger students.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Make more systematic use of the range of opportunities for writing across the subjects of the curriculum.
- Extend opportunities for students to evaluate their own work and to identify for themselves ways in which it could be improved.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

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

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.



### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
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	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	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?	1	1

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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	

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

27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Okehampton College, Okehampton EX20 1PW

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection, particularly for the friendly and open way in which you talked to us in discussions, in lessons and around the college.

We judged your college to be good and improving rapidly. Most of you are rightly pleased with the opportunities you are given. The college has some important strengths.

- You make good progress in your work, supported by good teaching and a good curriculum.
- Your behaviour is excellent and most of you greatly enjoy life and work in the college.
- The college supports and guides you in your work and in your wider development very well.
- The leadership and management of the governors, the principal and other staff are outstanding.

We have asked the college to improve two aspects.

- The opportunities for writing in the different subjects need to be more systematically planned across the college to help you to develop your skills more effectively and we have asked the college to address this.
- The college has started to give you opportunities to consider how well you are doing in your work and to think about how to improve it. We have asked for these to be extended and you can help by making the most of these new opportunities.

Thank you again for your assistance during the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Grahame Sherfield

Her Majesty's Inspector