

Carterton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123236
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340312
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Robin Gaff

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	622
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Siobhan O'Brien
Headteacher	Niall McWilliams
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, students and a representative of the local authority. They observed the college's work, and looked at planning and evaluation documents, as well as reports completed by external bodies, including the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised the college's own analysis of students' progress and attainment, as well as a total of 144 questionnaires received from parents, 91 from students and 59 from staff.

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

- the college's success in improving students' achievement, including that of boys and other underperforming groups
- the extent to which the college ensures that teaching includes sufficient challenge and opportunities for active learning
- the impact of the engineering specialism, and other developments in the curriculum, on students' learning and personal development
- the impact on students' cultural development of the college's measures to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

Carterton Community College is much smaller than the average secondary school. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2008. The overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage. The college has a small education support base for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of such students is in line with national averages. A small number of students, who are on the roll of a local further education institution, follow a post-16 course at the college. The number of students who join or leave the college other than at the usual time is larger than in most secondary schools, because a high proportion are children of service personnel from the neighbouring Royal Air Force base at Brize Norton. The college has experienced falling rolls owing to the contraction in the base's facilities. The college was awarded specialist status for engineering in 2007. It gained Healthy School status, as well as the Sportsmark silver award, in 2007. There is provision for childcare, managed by a private company, on a site adjacent to the college premises.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Carterton Community College gives its students a satisfactory and rapidly improving standard of education. The headteacher is tireless in his determination to accelerate the rise in standards which has already taken place. He is well supported by leaders at all levels and by the governing body, who play an active role in ensuring that the college's forward momentum is maintained. Many parents comment on its improvement, and its reputation in the locality is deservedly increasing.

The provisional GCSE results for 2009, as well as the college's robust data for current Year 11 students, show that attainment overall is average and is rising quickly. The rate of students' progress is satisfactory and also improving. There is no longer a significant gap between the performance of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities now achieve at least as well as other groups. The college has developed increasingly sophisticated systems for monitoring students' performance, and for intervening when they are at risk of underachieving. It has also ensured that the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4, provides a better match to students' interests and abilities by including a good variety of courses, including vocational courses, some linked to the college's specialism. Leaders recognise the need to further develop the Key Stage 3 curriculum, so that students have more opportunities for independent learning, for example by making productive links between different subject areas. Leaders and managers have accurately and frankly evaluated the college's strengths and weaknesses. This, together with the progress the college has already made in addressing areas of underperformance, shows its good capacity for further improvement.

Teachers in both key stages include good opportunities for active learning in their lessons. Most proceed at a good pace, but activities are not always sufficiently well-tailored to meet the needs of different groups and individuals. The use of written assessment is inconsistent. Some teachers' comments do not include enough detailed information to ensure that students understand the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Staff have established an orderly and purposeful atmosphere, and students behave well. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Their enjoyment of their college experience is demonstrated by their good attendance and enthusiastic participation in out-of-college activities. Students feel very safe in college, and they show a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Many of them take advantage of the good opportunities to contribute to the college and wider communities, for example through the college council, by helping in local primary schools and by raising money for charity. Their punctuality and their ability to get on well with one another and with their teachers exemplify the ways in which they are well prepared to

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meet the demands of employment and future study.

The college is a harmonious and well-organised community. It has established very close partnerships with the community it serves, including primary schools, local companies and the town's largest employer, the Royal Air Force base. It makes very good use of these links to promote students' learning and development. Students have good opportunities to learn about life in other countries through the college's links with schools elsewhere in Europe and in Africa. Their knowledge and appreciation of the range of faiths and traditions represented in modern Britain are less well developed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of students' progress by:
 - giving students more detailed written information which will enable them to understand the next steps they need to take to improve their work
 - ensuring that lessons include activities that are sufficiently well-tailored to the needs of all groups and individuals.
- Improve students' opportunities for learning and development by:
 - including more provision for cross-curricular activities in the Key Stage 3 curriculum
 - ensuring that students have more chances to develop their understanding and appreciation of the different cultures and traditions represented in the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

When they join the college, students' attainment is broadly average. They make steady progress and by the time they leave, their standards are in line with national expectations, representing satisfactory achievement. In 2007, GCSE results dipped slightly, including the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C. However, in 2008, students' performance at GCSE rose significantly. This rising trend accelerated in 2009, and the college met or exceeded the challenging targets it had set for itself. The college's rigorous monitoring of students' performance, and case studies which highlight the success of its intervention procedures for students who are falling behind, indicate that this trend of improvement is being sustained. Students' good behaviour contributes well to their learning and progress because most are willing to listen to and learn from one another. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, students' mature response to the task set, writing a letter to their favourite living author, helped them to make good progress by sharing and developing their ideas. The school acknowledges, however, that there is still more to do to improve progress and achievement.

Students behave safely, for example in workshops and laboratories. They say that bullying incidents are rare, and are dealt with well by the college. The overwhelming majority of parents believe their children are safe in college. Most students enjoy

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college, and they feel well supported. One Year 8 student said, 'There is always someone to talk to if you need help with your work, or if you just want to talk to someone.' The national awards demonstrate students' support for the college's initiatives to promote healthy living. Many of them walk or cycle to college, and choose healthy options in the canteen. Students benefit from good opportunities to develop work-related skills through work experience placements, and in subjects such as media studies where they develop skills in presentation and marketing. The number of students who leave the college without gaining places in further education, employment or training is extremely low. Students gain a good understanding and awareness of current moral and spiritual issues through the college's close links with and proximity to the local air force base. Their adherence to the college's motto, 'Service before Self' is demonstrated, for example, by their respectful observance of Remembrance Day ceremonies.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their subjects well and many promote them enthusiastically, with the

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

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result that their students are well motivated and enjoy their lessons. For example, in a Year 11 German lesson students developed their listening comprehension and pronunciation skills by watching a video of a German rock band and joining in the words of the song. Teachers make learning objectives clear, and plan a range of activities in lessons. Students benefit from good opportunities to become involved in their own learning, through group or paired work. However, lessons do not always include activities which correspond to the preferred learning styles or interests of all the students, which limits their progress. Teachers make good use of questioning techniques to check and develop students' understanding. Many provide good oral feedback to students about their progress. Marking is often constructive, but its frequency and quality vary between teachers, and it does not always give students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

The college keeps its curriculum under constant review and has made significant improvements since the last inspection, for example in the range of vocational options. This has been a significant factor in improving students' attainment. The college's engineering specialism is having a growing impact. Students benefit from a wide range of technology courses in Key Stage 4, and enjoy taking part in special events, for example a day in which students competed to devise and build siege engines. The college has also been instrumental in improving provision for technology teaching in local primary schools. Working with a local further education college, it is taking the lead in developing post-16 courses and has ambitious but realistic plans to develop this provision further. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets national requirements and recommendations. The college plans to adopt a more thematic approach to learning in this area, which will build on students' primary school experience, and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. Students participate well in a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a range of sports, as well as drama, art and technology-related events.

The college takes good care of its students. Staff, including the senior team, know their students well. The college helps to ensure a smooth transition from primary school, and acts decisively and effectively to minimise unauthorised absence. As a result, the proportion of students who are persistent absentees is low. The college's systems for liaison with parents are comprehensive and effective, although a few parents feel that the college does not take sufficient account of their views. Academic and pastoral staff work well together to support students who have been identified as being at risk of underperforming. Lack of communication between staff sometimes limits opportunities to improve students' progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-targeted support, both in and outside of lessons, which enables them to make at least satisfactory progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
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?

The headteacher and his senior team have implemented an extremely thorough and rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, and can point to areas where their focused guidance has brought improvement. Leaders have set challenging but realistic targets for further improvement, underpinned by thorough and well-conceived longer- and short-term planning. Morale is high: staff understand, support and work hard to implement the priorities for development. The college has made good use of support given by the local authority to improve teaching and learning. It has introduced effective mechanisms for sharing good practice in teaching, for example 'coaching trios', but the impact of these measures has yet to be fully reflected in students' progress. Governors bring a good range of experience and expertise to the college. They show a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, for example with regard to safeguarding. The great majority of parents say they are impressed by the way the college keeps them informed about issues relating to their children's learning and development, for example through the 'Keeping Up with the Kids' forums. The college's effective promotion of equality of opportunity is demonstrated by its success in minimising the gaps in performance between different groups, and by the commitment shown by staff and students to combating prejudice and discrimination. Procedures for safeguarding children, including child protection and arrangements for vetting staff appointments, are well developed. The college shows a high degree of commitment towards promoting community cohesion, and has gained recognition locally and beyond for its work in this area. It has developed the use of its premises for community activities, and established productive links with a range of local bodies through its specialist status. This benefits the college's students as well as those from other institutions who participate in them. College students run the local youth council, and have given presentations at national events for headteachers and senior school staff. The college has responded well to reductions in its budget caused by circumstances beyond its control, minimising the negative impact on students' learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents and carers are supportive of the college, and are happy with their children's experience there. The comment of one parent, 'I have been extremely happy with all aspects of the learning, pastoral support and communication between school and parents', was representative of those who expressed their views. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities were very appreciative of the support given to their children by the college. A few comments expressed reservations about the ways in which the college deals with unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, but students themselves, and a large majority of parents and carers, did not share these concerns. Overall, inspectors broadly agreed with the views expressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Carterton Community College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 144 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 637 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	26	92	64	11	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	48	33	92	64	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	54	38	76	53	10	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	36	76	53	11	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	37	83	58	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	26	87	60	12	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	18	100	69	12	8	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	27	83	58	13	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	28	88	61	7	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	24	88	61	15	10	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	18	88	61	12	8	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	57	40	82	56	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	37	81	56	8	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Carterton Community College, Carterton, OX18 1BU

Thank you all for being so welcoming and helpful during our recent visit to the college. I am writing to tell you about our findings.

Your college gives you a satisfactory standard of education overall. Its strengths include the curriculum and the good care, guidance and support you receive. Standards are rising rapidly as more and more of you gain good qualifications. Students' progress is improving too, and almost all of you go on to further education or training when you leave the college. You say you feel safe because there is little bullying, and when it does happen the college deals with it well. You understand about healthy lifestyles. Many of you take advantage of the healthy options in the canteen, and take part in sport and other physical activities. You contribute well to the community through the college and local youth councils, and by raising money for charity. You behave well in lessons and around the college, and you get on well with one another and with your teachers. You learn about how people live in other parts of the world and discuss the big questions in life. We think you need to be able to find out about different faiths and lifestyles in this country. Most of you say you enjoy college, and you show good attitudes to learning. You have good opportunities to work together in pairs and groups. We think teachers should plan more activities in lessons that match different learning styles and abilities. Teachers tell you how well you are doing but do not always give you enough written information to help you improve your work. You benefit from a broad curriculum with plenty of choices in Years 10 and 11. We think the college should help you make more connections between different subjects in Key Stage 3. College staff, including the senior team, know you and look after you well.

The headteacher, his senior staff and the governors run the college well. To make it even better we think they should:

- Improve the rate of progress still further by making sure that you receive enough written feedback to help you improve your work, and that all lessons include activities that match your needs and abilities
- Give you more chances to make connections between subjects in Key Stage 3, and to learn about different faiths and traditions in the United Kingdom.

We wish you all the best for the future!

Yours sincerely

Robin Gaff,

Lead inspector

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