

da Vinci Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134724
Local Authority	Derby
Inspection number	341514
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

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	626
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martyn Cooper
Headteacher	Mr Rob Martlew (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 32 lessons and 31 teachers, and held meetings and discussions with staff, groups of students, representatives from the governing body and the National Challenge Adviser. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of students' progress, records of classroom observations, attendance and exclusion data and monitoring information. They analysed 42 staff, 102 student and 59 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether the school's analysis of attainment on entry in English and mathematics is used well enough to tackle low standards and to track progress for groups of learners
- how well literacy and numeracy skills are promoted across the curriculum
- the school's work on attendance, absence and mid-year entry, and the impact on learning and progress.

Information about the school

- da Vinci Community College is a smaller-than-average secondary school. The school population is predominantly White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is slowly rising with a few that are at an early stage in learning English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is high. Student mobility is much higher than average. The number of students identified by the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Most of these students have literacy or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. Collaborative arrangements are in place with the local authority, local schools and a further education college to extend curriculum provision. The school gained specialist status for technology in 2008, and holds a number of national awards including Healthy Schools, International Schools and Careers Mark.

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

Since the time of the last inspection, aspirations have been raised with many more students choosing to continue their education beyond the age of 16. The Principal and staff are successful in creating a strong community spirit in which individuals feel valued. This is shown in the friendly and respectful relationships between students and staff, the good behaviour observed and the positive attitudes to learning in lessons.

Students enter the school with standards that are well below the national average. A significant number of students join the school at other times of the year. Although standards remain low in English and mathematics, notable improvements have been made. The proportion of students who gain five or more higher GCSE passes continues to rise. Improvement has been slower to achieve in the proportion gaining a high grade pass in both English and mathematics, but the school's target was achieved in 2009 and the attainment gap with national standards reduced. Leaders identified too much variation in standards across groups of learners, for example the boys, able students and those eligible for free school meals. Irregular attendance and persistent absence is an additional barrier to higher standards for a small minority of students. The school has been successful in increasing the proportion of students to gain five or more A* to G passes including English and mathematics to above the national average.

From very low starting points students make good progress as a result of strong strategic leadership, evident in the Principal's clear understanding of the provision required to tackle low standards. The curriculum makes an effective contribution to students' progress through an extensive range of traditional and vocational courses. Well-established intervention strategies including mentor sessions, one-to-one tuition, and small group working also boost students' achievement. Improvements in teaching quality, and good quality care, support and guidance ensure that students' personal needs are well known, and increasingly met.

The school has continued to strengthen its tracking of students' progress. Current records for Year 11 students that take account of early entry and teacher assessments indicate that outcomes for 2010 will be boosted by an improvement in English and mathematics. Closer management of developments across both subjects support effective coordination and follow-up action at points of data collection and analysis. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with much that is good. Lessons are typically well managed; teachers instil a positive work ethic. However, the use of prior learning and assessment information in the planning and delivery of lessons and tasks is not consistent. As a result, there are missed opportunities to develop specific literacy and numeracy skills, and to promote the skills and confidence required for independent learning. Students enjoy lessons where they have challenging practical tasks with

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opportunities to discuss their learning in pairs and small groups. Too often, students complete the same task regardless of their prior attainment and this leads to an over-dependence on the teacher for direction and information.

Leaders have a broadly accurate view of strengths and areas for development, drawing on classroom observation, daily learning walks, progress tracking and work scrutiny. Leaders recognise the need to further refine data collection by groups of learners supported by targets. Leaders demonstrate a good capacity to bring about further improvement through the upward trend in attainment, progress and attendance; strong partnerships that extend curriculum opportunities; regular communication with parents and carers, and an effective system for improving teaching quality. The culture of continuous improvement is securely embedded, with strong support from middle leaders evident in a rigorous system of area reviews. Through the technology specialism, good work has improved the delivery of technology in local primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to increase the proportion of students who make the progress expected from Key Stage 2 through:
 - consistent use of detailed prior attainment information to plan schemes of work and lessons to meet the individual needs of learners
 - greater emphasis on progress in lessons, and less on additional intervention strategies
 - a stronger focus on promoting literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
 - target setting and progress tracking for sub-groups of learners.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that teachers more consistently:
 - plan lessons and a range of tasks that take full account of students' attainment, prior learning, assessment information, interests and learning needs
 - embed the use of a wider range of questioning skills to engage and challenge students' thinking, and to develop their oracy skills
 - check students' learning regularly during lessons so that plans can be adjusted, and build in more opportunities for self and peer assessment
 - provide more opportunities for students to discuss their learning in pairs and groups
 - set consistently high expectations for the presentation of students' work
 - pitch the level of work carefully to promote independent learning.
- Raise levels of attendance and reduce the number of students persistently absent through:
 - rigorous implementation of the revised attendance policy and procedures
 - regular analysis of attendance for individuals and sub-groups of learners

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- lesson plans that take account of students' patterns of attendance in order to strengthen their commitment to learning and progress.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next inspection.

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

Despite students' good learning and progress, outcomes are satisfactory as standards against national averages remain low even though they are rising securely. Through robust monitoring of progress, the school has been able to target groups and individuals more successfully. In 2009, students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress overall although there was variation between the different needs identified. Students with behavioural difficulties made less progress than those experiencing difficulty with learning. Leaders recognise the need to monitor sub-groups more closely to further refine provision. For the few students at an early stage in learning English as an additional language there is a positive picture of achievement supported by individualised provision and high levels of student motivation. Leaders have a clear view of the groups of learners who are at risk. These include the students who join the school mid-year and those whose attendance is a barrier to achievement.

Evidence from students' work seen during the inspection indicates that classes are making at least satisfactory progress, with many making good progress. Students' positive attitudes to learning make a good contribution to their learning. Students say that the display of learning objectives by the teacher helps them to focus on the purpose of the lesson, especially when linked to grade criteria, and used to review progress. In the better lessons questioning is used very effectively to develop students' thinking and to elicit what has been learned. This enables plans to be adjusted to reinforce or extend students' learning. This practice is not consistent. Students have good opportunities to develop and apply their information and communication technology skills.

Students report that there are a few occasions when their learning is affected by low level disruption. However, they comment very favourably on the improvements made to behaviour. Students say they feel safe in school and appreciate good levels of supervision. Although they were aware of the strategies in place to deal with bullying, a few students were not completely confident that concerns would be resolved speedily. Opportunities are available for students to take responsibility, such as through representation on the school's council, peer mentoring and involvement in charity work. There is scope to extend the range of student responsibilities to enable all students to benefit. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the curriculum and through assemblies. Involvement in the Connecting Classrooms project and links with schools in other parts of the world, such as Cameroon and Ethiopia, are broadening students' awareness of different cultures and global issues.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A comprehensive programme is in place to support the effective transition from primary schools and to support those students who join at other times of the year. The care of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable is outstanding. These students are well known to staff; there is strong evidence of effective multi-agency working that benefit young people and their families. Procedures have been strengthened and led to an improvement in overall attendance although levels of persistent absence remain too high, partly linked to late entry to the school.

The school provides a broad, balanced and flexible curriculum. Adjustments have been made to meet the needs of students through an increased focus on English and mathematics in Key Stage 3, and a wider range of options in Key Stage 4, in conjunction with local schools and colleges. An appropriate focus on personal, social and health education helps students to develop important skills of self-awareness and how to treat others with respect. There is a wide range of enrichment opportunities within the curriculum, such as trips to London or projects linked to the school's specialist status. Some students take advantage of a range of extra-curricular activities; participation in additional physical education activities is lower than average.

Teachers plan well-structured lessons that are generally calm and orderly. They have access to a comprehensive range of assessment information to support high expectations for students. The quality of teaching is dependent on the use of this

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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information to tailor learning tasks to meet students' needs. In the stronger lessons teachers provide an interesting variety of stimulating activities that help to engage students in their learning. A common approach to marking helps students to understand their next steps in learning; this contributes strongly to learning when the improvement points are specific. The use of homework to reinforce, consolidate and extend learning is variable across subjects and groups of learners. A strategy to promote good quality presentation of students' work is less well developed.

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
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 Principal has been highly influential in creating a cohesive, motivated and enthusiastic staff team committed to the school's improvement. Overall priorities are accurately identified with detailed action plans to coordinate the school's work. Leaders are developing different ways to improve evaluation, such as gathering feedback from students on the range of intervention strategies. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in target setting, monitoring and quality assurance processes. Joint work through area reviews provides a good opportunity to model effective practice. This reinforces the focus on the quality of teaching as the core activity to accelerate learning and progress. Improvements have been made in the quality of teaching as a result of regular monitoring and training.

A strong emphasis on equality of opportunity is evident in the improving trend in standards, and the good systems in place to identify and tackle inequality. The attainment gap with national levels and between groups of learners is reducing. The school provides a safe and socially inclusive environment. Racist incidents are rare. The high level of persistent absence remains a barrier to the school's work on promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion. Leaders have a secure view of the current context and steps to take to promote community cohesion. Contributions are mapped across the curriculum, through a wide range of events, and global links. However, measures to evaluate the impact on students' attitudes, awareness and understanding are not sufficiently in place to influence provision.

The governing body has benefitted from training to support a stronger contribution to the school's self-evaluation. Governors have a general picture of standards and progress through the Principal's reports and analysis, but are less aware of the progress of different groups of learners as they move through school. Safeguarding arrangements

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are securely in place. The evaluation of policies is less well developed, such as gathering views from students, parents and staff on the operation and effectiveness of support systems, as in the management of the small incidences of bullying. Members of the governing body are increasingly involved in improvement groups with senior and middle leaders.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents/carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire was low. The vast majority of these are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the school's improvements in recent years. The inspection team endorse these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Da Vinci 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 626 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	51	28	47	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	54	26	44	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	53	28	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	53	26	44	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	59	24	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	44	32	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	39	36	61	0	0	0	0
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)	31	53	28	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	51	27	46	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	55	25	43	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	45	30	52	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	51	29	49	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	64	20	34	1	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



28 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Da Vinci Community College, Derby, DE21 4ET

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited recently. You told us that da Vinci is a friendly place and has improved; inspectors agree. More of you continue your education beyond the age of 16 years to give you extra choices and opportunities for the future. We were impressed with your attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons. You appreciate the care, support and guidance you receive. You told us that you feel safe, although a few students said that some incidences of bullying were not always resolved speedily. The Principal has built a strong community spirit across the school. Staff have worked hard to make improvements since the last inspection. Standards are low but rising and you make good progress from your entry to the school. Leaders have good systems in place to track your progress and to plan extra help if you fall behind. However, irregular attendance and persistent absence is a big concern and a barrier to the learning and progress of too many students. The quality of teaching is improving, although it does vary across the school. We could see that you learn best when you are clear about the learning objectives, have interesting tasks to complete in pairs or groups, and when teachers check your progress regularly during lessons.

At the end of the inspection, we identified some improvement points to help the school to be even more successful:

- continue to raise standards in English and mathematics
- make further improvement to teaching so more lessons help you to make good progress
- improve attendance levels and reduce the number of students with poor attendance.

You can play your part in the next phase of the school's development by attending every day and working hard to achieve your learning targets. We send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić

Her Majesty's Inspector

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