

John O'Gaunt Community Technology College

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 110050 |
| Local Authority | West Berkshire |
| Inspection number | 356679 |
| Inspection dates | 21–22 September 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Daniel Burton |

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

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 448 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 71 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr John Adey |
| Headteacher | Neil Spurdell |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 September 2010 |
| School address | Priory Road Hungerford RG17 0AN |
| Telephone number | 01488 682400 |
| Fax number | 01488 681283 |
| Email address | office.jog@westberks.org |

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 26 lessons saw 25 teachers teach. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, staff and the school's National Challenge adviser. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, data and analyses, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and 147 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by students and staff.

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

- The reasons for the rise in attainment in 2010 and the extent to which the school has addressed previously low achievement of middle ability band students.
- The quality of leadership and management at all levels to establish whether the school is well placed to maintain improved attainment
- The extent to which teaching consistently ensures good progress in lessons.
- Whether the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than the average secondary school and has a small sixth form. Most students are of White British heritage, with a very small minority of students from minority ethnic groups, with no group predominating. Very few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, with higher proportions of students with a statement of special educational needs than are seen in other schools. The range of needs includes moderate learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. The school is a specialist technology college. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2009.

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

John O'Gaunt Community Technology College is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. The school has emerged successfully from a difficult period of instability at senior and middle leadership level and is now very well placed to build on the very significant improvements made over the last 18 months. Achievement, though inadequate in 2009, is now satisfactory and improving, with the result that attainment, which was previously low, is now broadly average. In 2010, the school secured its best ever examination results. Fifty-nine per cent of students achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics and 76 per cent of students achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C overall. This represents good progress for last year's Year 11 students. These improvements are a consequence of a range of factors.

- Leadership and management arrangements have been strengthened significantly at all levels. The headteacher has galvanised staff and there is a shared determination to ensure that all students fulfil their potential.
- The additional support provided through the National Challenge initiative has meant that staff are now much more skilled at monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of provision than before. Much more effective systems to monitor students' progress now enable teachers to identify and address underachievement quickly.
- Strategies to eliminate ineffective teaching have been highly successful. The school has taken robust action to tackle weaker teaching and more lessons are good or outstanding than before. All lessons seen during the inspection secured satisfactory or better progress and none were judged to be inadequate.
- The expansion and refinement of curriculum provision has helped to ensure that the needs of all students are met more effectively than before.

Students, staff and parents have noted the recent improvements. Inspectors agree with one parent who, typifying the views of many others, wrote: 'The school has secured consistent improvement in all areas; teaching, the environment, achievement and leadership. It is becoming a real credit to the community which it serves.' Students and their parents and carers reported consistently that students feel very safe in school.

However, the headteacher and his team know that there is more work to be done to build upon these improvements and particularly to ensure the best practice in teaching and learning is seen more widely across the curriculum.

- While there is some good and outstanding teaching, the best practice has not yet been shared sufficiently to ensure that students make good progress in all their lessons. Some teachers have a tendency to talk too much and do not provide enough opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.

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- While achievement has improved overall, more able students performed less well than other groups in 2009. This, in part, is because teachers have not yet developed questioning techniques which provide stretch and challenge for the most able students.
- Teachers' use of assessment to secure good progress is not yet fully consistent. Not all staff use the detailed assessment information they have for each student to ensure everybody's needs are met. In some lessons, staff do not check the understanding of the whole group before moving on to the next task.
- The increased rigour of monitoring and evaluation seen in Key Stage 4 has not yet been fully extended into the sixth form. As a result, there remains too much variation in achievement within and across subjects.
- The school is an extremely cohesive community and engages well with the local community. However, strategies to develop students' understanding of the wider United Kingdom community are underdeveloped.

The improvements that the school has secured have had a very clear impact in raising achievement. Self-evaluation has proved to be accurate and effective in helping the school address previous weaknesses. Systems are now securely in place to enable the school to build on the significant progress it has made. As a result, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the main school and in the sixth form, so that, by September 2011, 80 per cent of lessons secure good or better progress, by:
 - fully developing strategies to share the good and outstanding teaching practice seen in the school
 - ensuring lessons promote students' independent learning skills more consistently, providing increased opportunities for students to take risks, speculate, hypothesise and work together to solve problems
 - developing teachers' questioning skills to ensure that all students, and particularly the most able, are provided with sufficient stretch and challenge
 - ensuring that teachers make more effective use of detailed assessment information to ensure that teaching and learning is more closely aligned to students' individual needs and academic targets
 - developing strategies to enable teachers to check the progress and understanding of the whole group at key transition points in lessons.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form by:
 - increasing pass rates at AS level and the proportions of students attaining the higher grades at AS and A2 level
 - eliminating underachievement in subjects which have performed less well
 - fully implementing rigorous systems for target setting and tracking student

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progress in all subjects.

- Increase opportunities for students to engage with those from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds within the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enjoy coming to school and behave well in and between lessons. Students from a range of backgrounds, including those whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable, reported that there is very little bullying in the school. They told inspectors that staff are extremely helpful if ever they need additional help or support.

Students respond well to opportunities to contribute to the school and local community through their work as prefects, mentors, junior sports leaders and the school and hall councils. They are committed to charity work seen, for example, through the annual Christmas concert for elderly members of the local community. While students are also consulted about the quality of teaching, not enough students are given opportunities to help shape the direction of the school and to contribute to improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.

Progression rates to further education, employment or training are good. Students from a wide range of socio-economic groups take full advantage of the school's extra-curricular programme and the proportions of students engaged in three or more hours of high quality sport per week is significantly above the national average.

Students work hard in lessons and get on extremely well with their teachers and each other. In the best lessons, they make good and sometimes outstanding progress. In these lessons, for example in music, food technology and psychology, students relish opportunities to work independently and in groups. They exhibit enthusiasm and self-discipline in equal measure when they are given stimulating learning activities which are both challenging and well matched to their needs. However, in lessons which are overly dominated by teacher talk or more mundane tasks, students become too passive and their progress is no better than satisfactory.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers, particularly because of the good specialist support they receive in improving basic literacy and numeracy skills. Students with autistic spectrum disorder consistently achieve well, particularly in English. In lessons, as for other students, their progress is closely aligned with the quality of teaching.

The small proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their peers in lessons and in examinations, with some examples of good progress. There is no discernible difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | 1 |
| 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 | 3 |

How effective is the provision?

While the quality of teaching and learning remains satisfactory overall, an increasing proportion of lessons secure good progress with some pockets of outstanding teaching. Students who spoke to inspectors were keen to report how much teaching has improved in the past 18 months. While teachers are making increasingly good use of assessment information to inform lesson planning, this does not yet consistently result in lessons which fully meet the needs of all learners. Students are offered good support from learning support assistants, though their impact is inhibited in lessons where both support staff and students spend too much time listening to the teacher.

Improvements to the curriculum have had a marked impact in raising achievement. The school has extended its provision for vocational courses and students are now able to choose from a good range of BTEC qualifications. Adjustments to provision in mathematics and science in particular have led to much higher attainment than before. Provision to meet the needs of those who find learning more difficult effectively promotes students' future economic well-being by providing alternative qualification routes. Partnerships with local business organisations support planning and provision of work-related and enterprise activities. Cross-curricular days are used to develop enterprise and problem solving skills. The school's specialist status in technology has pioneered this approach and has encouraged more widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school.

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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Effective provision for care, guidance and support is now enabling more students to achieve well than before. The school's work to raise attendance has been especially effective, with a particularly strong impact in reducing the proportion of students who are persistent absentees. As a result, overall attendance is now above average. Pastoral care is excellent and students entering the school in Year 7 benefit from a comprehensive support programme. Systems to improve academic guidance are developing well although tutors are not yet equally effective in providing academic guidance and support for members of their tutor group.

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 school benefits from the excellent leadership of the headteacher who, with his able senior team, has steered the school through a period of considerable turbulence. Robust action has been taken to address weak teaching and the school has made a series of good appointments to strengthen leadership capacity at all levels. The impact of these changes is seen very clearly in higher achievement and attainment, better attendance and students' improved behaviour.

Strong leadership, together with training brokered through the National Challenge programme, has helped to strengthen capacity at all levels. The school's success in raising attainment in 2010 has given staff the confidence and determination to improve the school further. As one member of staff commented, 'We are united as a staff with a true shared vision.'

Governance has been strengthened and the governing body are now much better equipped to hold the school to account than before. Safeguarding arrangements are good and leaders and managers ensure that staff are well informed about child protection policies and procedures

The school's work to promote equality has been strengthened by improved systems to monitor the progress of all groups of learners. As a result, the school has been highly effective at raising the achievement of middle ability students. School leaders recognise that these improvements now need to be matched by increased proportions of A and A* grades at GCSE for the most able students.

Strategies to promote community cohesion are in place but are not yet fully evaluated. However, leaders and managers recognise that students are given insufficient opportunities to engage with those from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic

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

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backgrounds within the United Kingdom

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 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

Sixth form

Improvements in achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 have not yet been fully matched in the sixth form. While there is some good achievement, notably in art, physical education and physics, some students achieved less well in 2010 in other subjects, for example in German, sociology and ICT. Pass rates on A level courses are broadly average, but are below average at AS level. The school has rightly identified the need to increase the proportion of higher A level grades as a priority for improvement this year. Nevertheless, outcomes for students are satisfactory and demonstrate that the sixth form offers satisfactory value for money.

The school has maintained a good range of subject choices, given the relatively small number of students in the sixth form. The range of courses has been extended to include more vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level.

The recently appointed head of sixth form has a very good understanding of the areas requiring improvement and is already implementing new systems to secure more rapid rates of improvement than before. As a result, the sixth form is well placed to quickly improve.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 3 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 3 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaires from the parents and carers of one-third of the students registered at the school, representing a higher proportion than is usually seen in secondary schools. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and 96 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaires agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'My child enjoys school'. A number of parents commented very positively on the quality of provision provided by the school, and particularly on improvements to the quality of students' learning and their progress. The questionnaires revealed that a few parents disagreed with the statement, 'The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle'. Inspectors looked closely at this and noted that higher proportions of students engage in healthy activities than seen in other secondary schools nationally. Students also have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Nevertheless, these comments have been passed to the school to inform future plans to improve this aspect of provision further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 65 | 44 | 76 | 52 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 68 | 46 | 75 | 51 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 55 | 37 | 82 | 56 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 50 | 34 | 82 | 56 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 49 | 33 | 87 | 59 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 46 | 31 | 89 | 61 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 38 | 26 | 89 | 61 | 13 | 9 | 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) | 51 | 35 | 76 | 52 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 54 | 37 | 76 | 52 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 44 | 30 | 82 | 56 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 35 | 24 | 87 | 59 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 65 | 44 | 72 | 49 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 69 | 47 | 68 | 46 | 3 | 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 | 58 | 36 | 4 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Secondary schools | 10 | 35 | 42 | 13 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 39 | 45 | 3 |
| Special schools | 33 | 42 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 18 | 40 | 29 | 12 |
| All schools | 11 | 42 | 38 | 9 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



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