

Kirk Hallam Community Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112947
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325724
Inspection dates	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Pam Haezwindt HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1081
Sixth form	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Mallett
Principal	Peter Hamer
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 November 2005
School address	Godfrey Drive Kirk Hallam Derbyshire DE7 4HH
Telephone number	01159 301522
Fax number	01159 445884

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated in detail the following areas: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management and the school's contribution to community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from the school's data, lesson observations including joint observations by inspectors and a member of the senior leadership team, students' work and school documentation, meetings with students and staff including the school's senior leadership team and a governor. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and some of these aspects have been included where appropriate in the report. The school opened its sixth form last week in conjunction with the Ilkeston School. The sixth form has not been inspected.

Description of the school

This is a popular school with slightly larger than average numbers of students attending. Its population is very largely White British, reflecting the surrounding community. The number of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is slightly below average. The school became a Specialist Technology College in 1998. It was identified as a high performing specialist school in 2005 and now has a second specialism in applied learning. It also has a rural dimension and leading edge status. It has several achievement awards, for example: Investors in People, Sports Mark and Careers Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is highly effective and provides an excellent standard of education. There is an exceptionally good ethos for learning throughout the school. All staff and the students are committed to making the school special.

Students arrive at the school with broadly average attainment and they leave having achieved standards that are above and often well above average. In 2008, 79% of Year 11 students left with five good GCSE examination grades, 61% including English and mathematics, which is well above the national average, exceeding the school's and local targets. Students are doing exceptionally well and making excellent progress. All groups of students do equally well and boys' results have improved greatly this year. It is particularly pleasing to see how well students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more vulnerable than others do. Key Stage 3 results have risen steadily since the last inspection; students achieve good results by the end of Year 9 and make at least good progress, although there are some variations between subjects year on year. Achievement in science is very good. Students' performance is regularly analysed and one of the strengths of the school is the plethora of strategies it uses to help students to do as well as they can. The students themselves appreciate the care and guidance that they are given and know that all staff 'go the extra mile' to ensure that their students achieve very well, know their targets and how to improve.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They are mature and articulate and almost all behave extremely well. They are clear about the school's purpose and its values and are 'signed up' to these. Inspectors observed nothing but exemplary behaviour and the school has very good systems for supporting this. However, students and parents mention some instances of poorer behaviour, although students say this does not interrupt their learning. Students are enthusiastic about coming to school, citing lessons, teaching and all the many extra curricular activities and opportunities, including those abroad, as key strengths of the school. They feel safe, knowing who to go to if there is anything that they need to discuss. They know that the very small amount of bullying is dealt with immediately, which evidence shows is the case. Racist incidents are recorded correctly; they amount to at most one a year in the past decade. Students know what they should do to be healthy. Attendance is now very good and there is a low level of unauthorised absence. The high standards and the many opportunities and activities that students have to learn about the world of work, such as enterprise projects, vocational subjects, the school garden and the many projects and competitions with local firms, all contribute exceptionally well to their skills for helping their economic well-being.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding and supports extremely well students' personal development. This is not a new feature of the school: many activities have been in place for a number of years. When Kirk Hallam first became a specialist technology college, it took the decision to retain 'community' in its title in order to signify the importance of the community to the school. The school works very hard through its personal, social, health and economic education programme (PSHEE) to develop its students' understanding of their part in the local and wider communities and the contributions they can make. Students were keen to

talk about how they contribute to building a school in Sri Lanka, the sports lessons they give in primary schools through their Sports Leadership Awards and about the many charities they raise money for. The school provides support for local primary schools, both administratively and financially, and it is helping them develop their Key Stage 2 modern languages programmes and information and communication technology (ICT) work. Kirk Hallam opens its doors in several ways to adults in the area including hosting lunches and Bingo for old age pensioners. Although the adult education programme closed last year due to funding issues, the school is re-opening its community classes again this term. It also has a 'laptop project for the elderly' about to begin. The college helps students to understand the multicultural diversity of Great Britain through a variety of subjects and through events like a World Culture Day and a Sikh Awareness Day. Beyond this, their understanding of their part in the global community is enhanced through the large number of international visits and visitors arranged by the school as part of the extended curriculum. The school has, this week, received notification of a successful funding bid for a project with Germany and had inspectors visited a week later, they would have seen a Japanese visit in operation.

Students say they enjoy their learning and coming to school because 'teaching is inspiring' and 'teachers make lessons fun by using a range of activities and methods'. Inspectors found many examples of good and outstanding teaching during their visit, with students showing great interest and making good, sometimes outstanding progress, as for example in a Year 10 religious education lesson during the last period of the day. Almost all lessons are very well planned, with attention to detail and thoughtful provision for students of differing attainment. The aims of lessons are clear. Staff make effective use of ICT devices, such as laptops and projectors, to support students' learning. Students find marking helpful. The school judges their teaching to be outstanding and inspectors found no reason to disagree, particularly given students' achievements and their resounding endorsements. However, the observation of teaching and learning to improve practice across the school is not as regular, rigorous or helpful as it could be.

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding and have ensured that improvements have been made to all aspects of the school since the last inspection, even those where it was judged outstanding previously. For example, the curriculum has moved on as the school has responded to government initiatives. The school has added to its options pathways and as a result, more students have better routes into languages. It has introduced vocational qualifications in horticulture and agriculture, languages and history. It has also introduced an alternative curriculum for some students who are finding a more traditional route hard-going and it has responded thoughtfully to the new national secondary curriculum for Year 7. Planning for the introduction of the Engineering diploma in 2009 is underway and it opened its sixth form last week. This is a school that does not stand still but at the same time does not lose sight of its key functions to raise students' achievement and help them to become happy, reflective citizens.

The principal and his senior leadership team (SLT) set extremely good direction for the school. It is a school where staff are consulted and feel empowered. There is a very good college-wide development plan with a clear focus on improvement. It could be even better were the success criteria more sharply focused

on student outcomes in the whole school sections. Since the last inspection, the SLT has expanded, with appointments that have seen improvements made to teaching and learning and to developing the role of faculty heads. The school has developed into a community where teaching and learning matter. Many teachers work tirelessly to develop their practice, and developments are shared but this has not yet moved into sixth form teaching. The school's teaching and learning website is known widely beyond the school and has a wide range of contributors.

The impact of having specialist status for technology, and the SLT's development of this with further re-designations continues to help the school provide an excellent and expanding quality of education for students. Its 'leading edge' status, particularly through its lead of the South-East Derbyshire Secondary School Improvement Partnership, brings many benefits to the school, as well as being another area where the school contributes to the community. There is now effective consultation with students, parents and governors, through, for example, student questionnaires on physical education, parental questionnaires on social and emotional aspects of learning and through feedback to governors after the regular review and planning days that the school holds. Governors are not only supportive but hold the school to account very well. Although the accommodation leaves much to be desired in some areas, particularly where PE facilities are concerned, it is well maintained and, as one student said, 'There are no leaking roofs!' Given its funding, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure high standards are consistently achieved.
- Increase the frequency of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and rethink the recording system for lesson observations, so that it places greater emphasis on learning.
- Provide professional development opportunities related to sixth form teaching.

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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.	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	IE²
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	IE²
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	IE²

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	IE²
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	IE²
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	IE²
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	IE²
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	IE²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	IE²
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	IE²

¹ 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.

² IE – denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	IE²
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	IE²
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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	



18 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Kirk Hallam Community Technology College, Kirk Hallam, DE74HH

I would like to thank you on behalf of Mr Roberts and myself for contributing to our visit of your school on Wednesday 17 September. We enjoyed our day with you very much and were able to find out a lot about the school, partly due to the conversations we had with you and the lessons we observed you in. Thank you for giving your views and for your cooperation.

We find that your school is very effective and provides an outstanding standard of education. Because of this, you are achieving exceptionally well and many of you are reaching very high standards by the time you get to the end of Year 11. Your personal development is excellent and we enjoyed listening to you describe your school and all the things you do and how they help you to develop. Your lessons are mostly very interesting and you say you enjoy them and that 'teaching is inspiring'. The opportunities you are provided with both on your school timetable, at lunchtime and beyond are outstanding and the school makes sure that these respond to your needs well. We were very interested in the school garden and were impressed by the amount of trips to other countries you have, as well as visitors to the school and your contributions to different communities. The school cares for you very well, providing excellent support and guidance. It is extremely well led and managed and staff and yourselves are committed to making the school special. You told us how much you appreciate the extra time staff put in and how good your working relationships are.

We have asked the school to do three things.

- To sustain consistently high standards.
- To improve how it monitors teaching and learning, particularly learning.
- To respond to any professional needs of sixth form teachers.

We wish you all a very good school year and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector