



Elgar Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116977
Local Authority Worcestershire
Inspection number 300087
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bilford Road
School category	Community		Worcester
Age range of pupils	11–16		WR3 8HN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01905 454627
Number on roll (school)	861	Fax number	01905 756517
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Gill Hellings
		Headteacher	Anthony James
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 1999		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	21–22 February 2007	300087

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Elgar Technology College serves an urban area of north Worcester. Many students are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. There are low proportions of students from minority heritage backgrounds and a small, but growing, number of students for whom English is an additional language. The attainment of students on entry spans the full ability range but on average is lower than the national figure. There are slightly higher proportions of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Students who join the school other than in Year 7 represent 20% of the cohort by Year 11; this is higher than the national figure of around 12%. About one in three teachers joined the school in the past 18 months. Numbers on roll are declining.

The school was inspected in January 2006 and given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Standards are exceptionally low. Students' progress has worsened since the previous inspection. The school is very good at including vulnerable learners and this can slightly distort performance figures because these students often have had disrupted learning experiences in their past. Almost all students gain some certification that helps their future employment and this reflects the good flexibility of the satisfactory curriculum.

The main cause of underachievement is inadequate teaching overall, despite some that is good and even outstanding. Too many lessons are not well enough planned to meet the learning needs and interest of every student. Marking is not consistently informing students of the steps they need to take to improve. In a significant minority of lessons a few students disrupt the learning of others. Exclusions have begun to rise, following a period of decline. Behaviour is unsatisfactory and attendance too low.

Most students are willing to learn, feel safe, enjoy school and are eager to help raise its performance. Good extra-curricular provision in the arts and sport, play a big part in encouraging healthy lifestyles and building social skills for the majority of students. Care, guidance and support of students is satisfactory with several strengths, most notably the commitment and efforts of teaching and support staff. But literacy and numeracy achievement is too low because of ineffective whole school collaboration in raising standards for all students in these basic skills.

Leaders and managers know where strengths and weaknesses lie, but their actions have yet to result in significant improvements in outcomes because good policies are not being consistently applied.

Specialist technology college status has brought improved community involvement. For example, science lessons for primary pupils are regularly held at school, and this helps better inform the school of what these pupils can do. The new resources and facilities have resulted in higher income due to lettings and community use. Staff speak well of better facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) that aid teaching and supports learning. Community goals are being met but the benefits for provision on students has not resulted in the school meeting its performance targets.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of students by ensuring that teaching in each lesson engages students in their learning and consistently implements the school behaviour and rewards policy.
- Ensure marking and assessment consistently inform students of how to improve.

- Ensure teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that match challenging learning tasks to student needs and capabilities.
- Continue to prioritise the raising of standards in literacy and numeracy by securing the participation of all subjects in this endeavour together with effective coordination of specialist intervention.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards remain inadequate. At Key Stage 3, overall standards remain exceptionally low with particularly disappointing results in English. Standards, and the overall progress made by students in Key Stage 3, declined from 2005 although in mathematics and science the attainment of pupils was better than in 2005.

At Key Stage 4 in 2006, despite slightly higher proportions of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSEs (A* to C) than in 2005, standards overall remained exceptionally low. When compared with similar students in similar schools progress was much lower than in 2005. Underachievement is more noticeable amongst girls. There was a welcome increase in the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSEs but a marked drop in those with no accreditation. Many students gain vocational certificates that serve them well in local employment. This helps in reducing the numbers of students who do not continue into education, training or employment.

Students with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve in line with their peers, as do the few recently arrived migrant students. They make satisfactory progress, for example in reading, when in booster groups but this is not sustained in all their lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Personal development and well-being are inadequate. There are some subject based opportunities for students for self reflection, such as in the performing arts. Well presented assemblies provide additional moments, but daily reinforcement of the spiritual message is inconsistent. Personal, social and health education programmes are being developed. There are examples of student work in art, drama, music and history that celebrate other cultures, but the promotion of learning to live in multicultural Britain is inconsistent.

Students are sincere, pleasant towards each other and staff almost all of the time and most are very loyal about the school. Most want to behave properly, but many need good adult direction to do so. The school behaviour and reward policy is not being operated consistently enough to reduce low level disruption in some lessons. In such a climate more serious misbehaviour occasionally arises leading to conflicts which can trigger exclusion. Behaviour is inadequate. One in seven students has been excluded for a fixed period, although this is a lower proportion than five years ago and within LA targets. Permanent exclusions have risen, partly to ensure that these challenging students are given specialist support in pupil referral units. Attendance is below average

and below the school's target. A range of new initiatives have had some impact on improving attendance in year 7 and 8, and unauthorised absence has been significantly reduced in recent years. Students enjoy school and enjoy being with friends. A few students have experienced intimidation but say the school deals with these incidents. Students usually adopt safe practices, for example, in workshops and laboratories.

There are good opportunities for extra-curricular activities with a good level of participation in performing arts and sport. Students benefit socially and culturally from good drama and art provision. Good physical education ensures this aspect of healthy living is strong. Students know they should be eating healthily, but most choose not to do so.

Some students collect money for charities. The school council plays a role in staff appointments, but most students are not aware of its impact. Preparation for future economic well-being is good because of good vocational certification and an excellent community based work experience programme, despite overall low basic literacy and numeracy skills. The good Connexions support provides excellent career counselling and helpful access to adult mentors.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall. Inspectors visited about half the classrooms and saw teaching that included some outstanding practice, but a significant proportion was inadequate. Students' learning has been interrupted by frequent staff changes. But many teachers, regardless of their time of service in the school, have low expectations of students' behaviour and ability to succeed. A significant minority of lessons suffer from low level disruption where students call out, speak out of turn, are allowed to ignore instructions and interrupt to the detriment of learning. Teachers often talk for too long and students become frustrated. Planning does not cater adequately for students with different learning needs.

Where teaching is at least satisfactory, relationships between teachers and students are good. Where teachers expect a lot they drive learning by questioning students, making them reflect on their understanding. In a good Year 9 English lesson students were helped to understand the assessment criteria, apply it by discussing examples of work in pairs, and then decide how they could improve future work. In an outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher set short, demanding tasks matched to students' target GCSE grades. In small groups students corrected and noted common errors to help the teacher assess any misunderstanding. Then they moved up a 'GCSE' grade in terms of demand, building upon growing confidence and attempting ambitious tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's strong emphasis on motivating students through providing a range of courses and programmes is successfully leading to a flexible curriculum that better meets the needs of its students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. However, there has not been an impact on achievement as yet and not enough urgency is given to developing students' literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school.

The school has developed effective partnerships with other agencies and organisations to enhance what it offers its students. The extended school provision has increased the opportunities both for supporting students and increasing the range of enrichment opportunities. Students value the variety of activities and trips and many participate. Some students in Years 10 and 11 appreciated the opportunity to take extra GCSEs in subjects such as drama and physical education and achieved a good grade.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students receive satisfactory care guidance and support. The school thoroughly implements policies to safeguard learners. Good systems record the progress of groups of students and they have improved since the last inspection. But this knowledge is not fully used to plan teaching and tackle overall weaknesses in student performance. Individual learning plans for students with learning difficulties or disabilities are effective but are not used enough in lessons, hindering the achievement of these students. There are several different interventions to help boost individual student attainment or personal development but some staff are not fully aware of the details. This compromises planning, causes confusions over groupings, and interrupts continuity for some learners.

Outside agencies are used well to support vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties. Good links with primary schools enable Year 7 students to settle in well. They are helped by a mentor scheme where older students take responsibility for helping them to improve their reading. Provision to integrate students excluded from other schools is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. There is a strong and inclusive commitment to do the best for students and staff go the extra mile in trying to meet some challenging social needs. This genuine spirit of care is reflected by the loyalty shown by most students to the school. But, the conscientious efforts of leaders, managers and staff since the previous inspection have not substantially improved the performance of the school and the key issues have not been resolved. There have been recent changes to leadership structures, one of which is to ensure coordination of the variety of student intervention programmes.

The school commissions an independent survey to gather views of parents and learners. These were consistent with inspectors' concerns about behaviour and standards. Very few parental questionnaires were returned to Ofsted inspectors. Nearly a third of teaching staff are new in post in the past 15 months. School leaders have yet to be successful in ensuring consistency of teaching and learning despite clear written policies and support from local authority consultants. There is a realistic knowledge of strengths and weakness in the school, but self-evaluation is too generous because it is not sufficiently related to the impact of provision on outcomes for learners.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis and stewardship of the various additional resources available is satisfactory. Because of the weak outcomes for learners, the school is not giving satisfactory value for money. Resources are adequate overall with some good provision of ICT, sports facilities, a new classroom block and refurbishment of some older accommodation.

A new chair of governors is aware of the challenges faced by the school and the urgent need to raise standards. She is clear about the way forward in terms of much better engagement with the school's local community and a better working relationship with the local authority. Recent visits by governors to the school have accurately picked up on the key strengths and weaknesses.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your helpful comments that you made during the inspection. We were particularly pleased to recognise your sense of commitment to the school and your wish to help it further improve. At the moment, the school is not providing an effective overall education and needs special measures to improve. Although the exam results in 2006 were better than before, they were not as high as they should have been. We agree with you that too many lessons are interrupted by chatter or lack of cooperation by some students. We are concerned that too many students are behaving badly enough to warrant being excluded. Most of you are rightly indignant that your learning is being distracted by poor behaviour.

The school is good at providing you with a variety of opportunities for work-related learning. As a result, most students are able to continue into employment, education or training when they leave. The after school clubs are well attended and do show the commitment of staff to giving you a wide range of experiences.

- We have suggested four steps that, with your own commitment to concentrate on learning in lessons, will bring about school improvement.
- Make sure all lessons engage you in active learning, and consistently use the school's behaviour and rewards policy.
- Marking should consistently show what you need to do to improve.
- Tasks in lessons should match your personal needs and capabilities.
- All subjects should play a part in a school wide plan to improve reading, writing and basic mathematics skills for all of you.

Inspectors will visit your school regularly to check on its progress.