

Ercall Wood Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123595
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	327947
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Michelle Parker HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	810
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Wagstaffe
Headteacher	Kathryn Owen-Reece
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Golf Links Lane Wellington Telford TF1 2DT
Telephone number	01952 387300
Fax number	01952 387301

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Ercall Wood Technology College is a medium-sized school. Pupils enter the school with results that are generally below average. However, the proportions of pupils who receive free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are both above average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also above average. There is a learning support unit within the school for pupils with learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average. The school has joint technology college and vocational education specialist status. It has been accredited with Leading Edge status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has been through a difficult period of high staffing turbulence which had resulted in low standards in English and particularly mathematics, but these issues have now been overcome and the school is on course to have a full complement of staff by September 2009. The school's data clearly show that students are now making better progress and standards are rising but are currently still below national averages. The headteacher and senior leaders form a very effective team and set challenging targets and high standards for all staff. Both senior staff and middle managers use a range of data to inform planning but they do not always compare across their different data to ensure that a full picture is given. This does not always take sufficient account of all the available information.

Good teaching can be seen throughout all departments. Students know their targets and feedback identifies good work. Improvements in teaching have reduced the occurrences of poor behaviour. However, parents rightly remain concerned about this and about the numbers of supply staff teaching in some departments. The school has put appropriate measures in place so that occurrences of poor behaviour have minimal impact on learning. From September the school will have the capacity to ensure lessons are covered by their own staff.

The curriculum has improved. It now meets statutory requirements and is closely matched to the needs of the students. The school's specialist technology status has enabled a range of departments to access improved information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, which enhances teaching and improves students' engagement and skill development. Strong links and mutually beneficial relationships have been developed with businesses and schools in the local area as part of the school's vocational education specialism. As a result, students are encouraged to solve real-life problems as part of their lessons and learn much about how the skills they develop are used in industrial and commercial environments. All students study for an accredited qualification in ICT and success rates are high. Alongside this, the development of 'travel to learn' is enabling students to develop good study habits and improve their work. Students are therefore well placed for their future economic well-being because of the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in both English and mathematics and literacy across the curriculum.

Students receive good quality care and guidance. This has led to a dramatic reduction in the previous year's high numbers of exclusions. In addition, it has ensured that looked-after students make similar progress to others.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The school ensures that students develop a good awareness of the need to live a healthy life. Students feel safe. There are rare occasions of bullying and racist incidents, but the school takes these very seriously and students feel that they are dealt with promptly. Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments meet statutory requirements.

Students say that they enjoy school and this is reflected in the improvements in attendance. Students are involved in the school council, but the school recognises that some groups of students, particularly those at risk of disengagement, are less inclined to give their view so do not have a sufficient say in their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use all the available school data to better inform strategic planning at all levels of leadership and management.
- Ensure that the views and opinions of all groups of students are taken into account in order to further reduce exclusions, incidences of poor behaviour and improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress overall. The strategies the school has in place to improve the achievement of boys have been effective. As a result, boys are now only two points behind girls. The school has also identified underachievement and lack of engagement by other key groups of students, and has begun to address this by supporting the progress of those students who speak English as an additional language. Pakistani students now make at least similar progress to their peers. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2008 reflected the problem the school was then experiencing with staffing and was below the national average, although students did well in ICT and 90% achieved a Level 2 qualification. This places them in a good position for the next stage of their education or career. Robust monitoring and student tracking data indicate that students are in line to do much better this summer. Strategies to improve English and mathematics results combined with a full complement of qualified staff have also been successful, and students are now working at far higher levels and are on track to achieve their challenging targets. Results in science are set to exceed targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to make good progress because of highly effective support and intervention.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

the school council and its contribution to the student voice. The school is good at listening to individual students, but it is less successful in understanding the views and opinions of other identifiable groups such as those at risk of exclusion, and this means that they do not always sufficiently discuss the barriers to their progress with the school. Students enjoy their lessons and the majority demonstrate good behaviour both in lessons and around the school. A small minority of disaffected students fail to reach these standards. The school is developing suitable strategies to rectify the situation. Good relationships exist between students and with staff, and this creates an environment where good learning can take place. It offers a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including a planned trip to Germany. Students' understanding of Britain as a multicultural society is well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

While the school's leaders recognise that staffing issues have affected the quality of teaching in some subject areas and are working effectively to address these, they correctly evaluate the overall quality of teaching as good. Most teachers plan their lessons using the good knowledge they have about their students' abilities and preferences so that learning activities are enjoyable and students are engaged by them. However, the positive working relationships in lessons are

not always utilised to best effect to encourage and challenge students to think as independent learners as teachers' questioning skills are inconsistent and, on occasions, students spend too long listening to teachers' explanations. Students make the best progress where lessons have clearly shared learning objectives and they evaluate their learning. When supporting individual students, teachers demonstrate the depth of their good subject knowledge and where teaching assistants are available to support learning, they are deployed effectively so that students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum continues to develop so that students have access to a broad range of subjects and learning activities which engage them and enable them to make good progress. Suitable actions have been taken to ensure that religious education and other experiences which contribute to students' personal development form an important part of the curriculum.

The curriculum for students in Key Stage 3 reflects identified learning needs well. There has been a recent emphasis on developing the key skills of numeracy and literacy, with increased provision of mathematics and English while maintaining a broad-based experience in other subjects, particularly those connected with the specialist status. In Key Stage 4, the core curriculum is supplemented by a good range of pathways which give students a choice of traditional GCSE courses and more vocational opportunities, including courses with external providers leading to accredited qualifications, and young modern apprenticeships. Provision for those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly enhanced by an option to receive greater study support through a dedicated, school-based programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has in place good systems for monitoring and assessing students' performance; students understand the targets to which they are working, and know how to achieve them. These two factors combined ensure students make good progress. There is still some variation in the quality of marking, which the school is addressing. Pastoral care is good and improving. Over the last 18 months the school has put in place a number of measures to successfully support disaffected students. Attendance remains stubbornly below national averages, despite considerable effort and a number of successful initiatives to improve the situation. Good provision is available for those who have worries or concerns. Support and guidance for students through work-related learning are good. Students are well informed about their future options for education and careers and the school liaises well with other agencies such as Connexions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leadership team are very effective in promoting school improvement at all levels. Recent appointments both to the senior leadership team and to key middle manager posts have strengthened leadership and management. All middle managers are now equally effective. Line management structures are supportive of staff and encourage their development. All staff work hard to successfully make rooms attractive and stimulating learning environments, and overcome the limitations of the ageing accommodation. The introductions of new schemes

of work and changes made to the choice of examination boards have more closely aligned the curriculum to students' needs. The school uses challenging targets in all subjects to raise standards for all. Systematic analysis and monitoring ensures that all departments keep on track to achieve improved standards and good progress. These measures have successfully addressed the uneven progress of students over the last three years. The school knows its key strengths and weaknesses well and collects a wide range of data to evaluate its progress. However, it does not make full use of all data to inform all levels of strategic planning. The school now has a good capacity to improve. It provides good value for money.

Governors are effective. They have a good understanding of school data and use this well to challenge the school. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Through its commitment to raising students' achievement and monitoring the progress of each individual, the school has worked with other schools and the multicultural service to analyse the community it serves and to support community cohesion through its curriculum and programme of activities. Following from this the school has extended its educational opportunities to adults who have not formerly had contact with them. As a result, they participate in a range of projects on photography, food, textiles and ICT. Work at a local level is impressive. Initiatives at national and international levels have not had as much time to make an impact and are in the early stages of development, such as the students' initiative of support of a community in Pakistan.

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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
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ercall Wood Technology College, Wellington TF1 2DT

Thank you very much for the help you gave us during the inspection. We were very impressed by how smart you are in your school uniforms and the polite and friendly way in which you spoke to us.

We agree with you that you go to a good school. The headteacher and senior team lead the school well. All the staff work hard to support and care for you to ensure you do as well as possible. As a result, standards are improving and you are making better progress in lessons because teaching is good. The curriculum is good and provides you with an increasingly wide range of opportunities. The 'travel to learn' course is enabling you to improve your study skills. This and your good achievement in ICT prepare you well for your future economic well-being. You mostly behave well, and you told us that you do not allow the occasional lapses in behaviour in lessons by a minority of students to distract you. You know how to be healthy and make safe choices. You enjoy school and you told us that on the rare occasions of bullying or racism, the school deals with it well. Your attendance has improved.

We have asked your headteacher and senior team to improve the school further by taking account of all their data when planning overall for school improvement, and encouraging all of you to voice your opinions about how to improve your school. You can help by continuing to improve your attendance and talking to your teachers about how you like to learn.

We wish you every success in all you do.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector