

Camborne Science and Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112053
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310776
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Pauline Robins 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)	1328
Sixth form	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Mitchell
Headteacher	Ian H Kenworthy
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Cranberry Road Camborne TR14 7PP
Telephone number	01209 712280
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Camborne is a larger than average community college with specialist status for science. The number on roll has declined in recent years in line with local demographics but is now rising and predicted to continue this trend in the coming years. By contrast, numbers in the sixth form have risen. There is a high level of social deprivation in the area, although the number of students eligible for free school meals is only slightly above the national average. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage and few students learn English as an additional language. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and the percentage of those with a statement of special educational need is significantly higher. The attainment of students on entry to the school is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Camborne is a good college, which has many outstanding features. This is the result of good leadership and management by exceptionally strong, enthusiastic and capable senior leaders and effective leadership at all levels. Parents' confidence in the college is high and the vision statement 'Learning for life' is evident throughout. The large number of responses to the Ofsted questionnaire represents parental comments from over half of the students. This is an exceptionally high return and the overwhelming majority were positive, with comments such as, 'My son loves going to school and has been given many opportunities to flourish and expand his experiences and learning.' The vast majority of parents feel that behaviour in college is good and that the college provides a safe and caring environment. This reflects the strong community spirit that is an outstanding feature of the college.

Standards throughout the college are broadly average. Students enter the college with below average levels of attainment and make good progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are most vulnerable. This college supports the needs of all students and promotes inclusion. Systems for collecting data are accurate and sufficiently sophisticated to monitor individuals and specific groups of students. Staff are now using this data consistently to ensure that their predictions and the setting of targets are accurate. Students are now clear about the levels at which they are working and what they must do to improve. The college has already recognised that weaknesses in literacy must be addressed across the curriculum if standards are to rise. At present, this is not coordinated at a sufficiently senior level.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The nurturing of self-esteem, self-confidence and high aspirations has enabled students to develop positive outlooks and resilience. Relationships between students and staff are based on high expectations and mutual respect. Consequently, students are punctual to class, work hard and respect the learning environment. The commitment of staff ensures that the quality of care and support is outstanding throughout the college and for all groups of students. Academic guidance is good and improving.

The quality of teaching and learning are robustly monitored, judgements are moderated to ensure accuracy, and weaknesses are addressed. Students say they enjoy their lessons because the teaching is good and teachers try to make the learning interesting and fun. The curriculum for students aged 11 to 16 is outstanding. It offers a wide range of courses and extra-curricular opportunities to meet the needs of students of all abilities. However, students in the sixth form do not routinely receive such a varied and enriching curriculum and the provision does not meet the needs of the full range of ability. Specialist status has a positive effect throughout the college, supporting the raising of standards in science and mathematics, broadening the curriculum, raising students' aspirations and providing enhanced training opportunities for staff.

The college reviews its performance thoroughly, which leads to secure responsibility and accountability for future actions. Staff morale is high and this helps to underpin the good capacity for the college to improve further. This is in part due to the confidence that staff, students and the community have in the headteacher.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. In the sixth form, they make good progress and achieve well. Over the last three years, the examination results have risen and students' individual progress has improved similarly. Standards are broadly average. Retention is good, with 75% of students continuing into Year 13 and the majority progressing to university. There are many opportunities for students to play a valuable part in college life. For example, they support those younger than themselves in literacy, they mentor and support in lessons, and lead the Student Voice. Through these and other activities, they develop good leadership skills.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Students talk of being encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to think for themselves. In particular, they speak warmly of the help and support they receive from teachers and the good advice on how to improve their work. A wide range of higher-level courses meets the individual needs of the current cohort of students. There is an expectation that students will take part in the enrichment curriculum but this is not a requirement. Approximately 30% of students take up a sports activity. For some students, this results in a relatively narrow curriculum. Other elements such as religious education and personal, social and health education are taught on a rolling programme or through off-timetable days. The college acknowledges this and is looking at ways to enable sixth form students to access a greater enrichment entitlement curriculum which will include sports, social and community options. The use of data to support students' progress has recently been strengthened, enabling teachers to monitor progress more effectively. The new director of sixth form has a clear vision for further development and she is well supported by the head of year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give higher priority to the development of literacy across the curriculum.
- Build on the outstanding 11–16 curriculum to enhance and broaden that offered in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the college with below average attainment and with relatively weaker literacy skills. By the end of Year 9, students make good progress in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in English. Overall progress during this key stage is good and standards are broadly average. The college has used its specialist status to improve its links with primary schools in mathematics and science and this has contributed to the rise in achievement. The college has recognised the need to improve the literacy skills of its new entrants and a number of strategies are in place to promote this. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact on literacy levels but are not embedded sufficiently throughout the college. The roles and responsibilities of relevant staff have altered to ensure that the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is monitored more carefully. The progress of these and the more vulnerable groups of students is good.

Students make good progress in most subjects by the end of Year 11 and standards are broadly average. However, there are fewer students reaching the higher grades than is found nationally. In the last four years, standards at Key Stage 4 have been inconsistent and this is a reflection

of the variability of the cohorts. It is also a reflection of the inclusive nature of the college, which attempts to give every student the best opportunity to demonstrate success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students say that they enjoy being a member of the college community and this view is supported by the overwhelming majority of parents. Behaviour around the college and in lessons is outstanding, and students exhibit high levels of cooperation, good humour and consideration towards each other. A minority of parents expressed concerns about verbal bullying but students say that this is rare and that incidents are dealt with fairly and promptly. Students are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through a variety of clubs and sporting opportunities. Increasing numbers are choosing the healthy options from the excellent meals provided.

Students demonstrate excellent leadership and organisational skills in various community roles, both within and beyond the college. A large number are prefects and mentors, while others actively participate in the decision-making processes of the college, for example in contributing to the school's behaviour policy, the evaluation of college meals and college security. In the wider community, students volunteer to support children in local primary schools, participate in a dance group set up in conjunction with the local police, and two serve as elected members of the Camborne Regeneration forum.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. Links with schools in other countries, for example with Japan through the science specialism and Kenya through the art project, enable students to gain a much broader understanding of other cultures, whilst raising aspirations and achievement. Members of the Student Voice play an active role in college and represent their peers in a range of settings. Well-developed social and interpersonal skills, positive attitudes and a strong work ethic enable students to plan and prepare for the world of work with confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The comprehensive and robust system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons means that the feedback given to teachers enables them to improve their teaching still further. In lessons, teachers use incisive questioning to develop students' thinking skills and place the onus on students to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers set a good pace and provide a variety of interesting learning activities that are well matched to the needs of the students. Students engage readily with these tasks, are well motivated and well behaved. In most lessons, information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to improve learning. This widespread use of ICT by staff and students is made possible because of the college's specialist status. Lessons are strongly focused on the students' awareness of what is expected of them and making sure that they know how to improve. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to increase progress by enabling students to stay engaged and understand the lessons fully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The college has a flexible approach to the curriculum that is responsive to all students' needs. For example, parallel courses in physical education allow students to opt for either a GCSE or alternative accreditation depending on their strengths. For some students, GCSE courses start early in Year 9 and AS levels in Year 11. Additional science and vocational science reflect the college's specialist status. For example, vocational and work-related aspects have been explored through the teaching of applied science linked to the catering industry. An innovative transition curriculum for all students in the first half-term of Year 7 focuses on developing learning skills, thinking skills and emotional literacy. This has had a positive impact on students' performance. The school has developed a flexible curriculum based on personal effectiveness, which is accredited. This highly personalised curriculum enables identified students to remain either in the college or pursue education or training with other providers. A tailored curriculum (GOLD) of mixed core subjects and work or college placements enables these students to make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, the college, sometimes in collaboration with other providers, offers a range of vocational opportunities and accreditation programmes in addition to its academic curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is broad and well attended. A good range of sports and practical activities are offered, including surfing and dance. Enrichment opportunities are wide-ranging and involve cultural aspects and extension of the curriculum. For example, students following science and mathematics courses have participated in subject conferences in Japan and Singapore as part of their study.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures and rigorous safeguarding checks meet requirements and are robust. Strategies to improve attendance have been successful in raising attendance to above the national average. Staff are working assiduously to reduce absence still further. Senior leaders, teachers and support staff work well together with a range of agencies to provide a coordinated response to families in need. The specialist support in the HUB provides a range of interventions to address the learning and emotional needs of students, and is a good aspect of a graduated response to the care and support provided for vulnerable students.

A good identification and tracking system links attendance, achievement and behaviour. It is understood and consistently applied by the majority of teachers but has yet to demonstrate an impact upon standards. Students know the level at which they are working and, as a result of focused discussion with their teachers, what they need to do to improve. They are clear about their targets, one of which is predicted on current performance and the other which provides challenge and could be achieved with increased effort.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior managers know their college well and have a clear vision for the future. This is both challenging and effectively communicated to all members of the college community. Relatively new senior management structures, good delegation and clear lines of communication are instrumental in ensuring that plans are fully realised. The processes linked to teachers' assessment and setting challenging targets for students are good. However, they

have yet to demonstrate an impact on improving performance. Leaders and managers at all levels contribute to the outstanding process of self-evaluation, and demonstrate their awareness and understanding of strengths and areas for development. They recognise that their role is to enable students to make maximum progress in order to improve their life chances. The excellent work of the finance director has been crucial in improving the fabric of the building and improving provision, and this has undoubtedly been reflected in students' enjoyment and achievement. Governors play an important part in the college's improvement. They understand its strengths, have the confidence to take calculated risks and strongly challenge any areas of perceived weakness.

The impact of specialist status is evident throughout the college and has been hugely influential. For example, the international dimension is broadening students' horizons and leading to curriculum change, while liaison with primary schools is raising standards in science. Inclusion is integral to the work of the college and because of this, the outstanding curriculum and many other initiatives, the college's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding.

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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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
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	2	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Camborne Science and Community College, Camborne, TR14 7PP

I should like to thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your college recently. We really valued the time you spent talking to us. The groups of students who represented you in the discussions on Thursday morning were a credit to you all. You helped us to get to know your college well in a short space of time.

The number of students who told us how much they enjoyed coming to college and how good it is overwhelmed us. We agree that Camborne is a good college with many things that are outstanding, like your personal development and well-being and the pastoral care and support you receive from staff. Your behaviour was exemplary and we were impressed by your positive attitudes to learning. Because of this and the good teaching you receive, you make good progress and reach broadly average standards.

We have asked the college to focus on two areas for development.

- Literacy levels are not as high as they need to be if you are all to make the good progress of which you are capable. Senior managers and teachers agree with this and we would like them to put in place a strategy to teach and support literacy across all areas of the curriculum.
- The curriculum in Years 7–11 is outstanding and we have asked the staff to consider ways to further extend the good curriculum in the sixth form so that it matches the outstanding standard achieved in the rest of the college. We hope you will contribute to that discussion.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to create a well-cared-for and happy place to work and learn. Like you, they have high aspirations and together I know you are striving to become an outstanding college.

With all best wishes for the future,

Yours faithfully

Pauline Robins Her Majesty's Inspector