



Emmanuel College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 108420
 LA Gateshead

Inspection number 277967
 Inspection dates 28 March 2006
 Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Bennett HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a Section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	City Technology College	School address	Consett Road Lobley Hill Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE11 0AN
School category	Independent with Religious Character		
Age range of pupils	11-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4602099
Number on roll	1231	Fax number	0191 4602098
Appropriate authority	The governing board	Chair of governing board	Mr Nigel McQuoid
Date of previous inspection	January 2001	Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Winch

Age group 11-19	Published April 2006	Reference no. 277967
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors met with the principal and other staff, students and parents. The chair of the Board of Directors was interviewed via a video link. Inspectors read a range of documents provided by the college, scrutinised a sample of the students' work, and observed a number of lessons. The inspection took account of national data, and analyses of information provided by the college, to compare the progress made by its students with the progress made by similar students elsewhere.

Description of the school

Emmanuel College is a City Technology College with a specific non-denominational Christian ethos. Its specialism is technology, but will include business and enterprise from Easter 2006. With over 1200 students on roll, including about 250 in the sixth form, it is larger than most secondary schools. Very few students enter or leave the college other than at the expected times and applications for students aged 11 are currently more than twice the number of available places. The college is funded directly from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and observes the Department's requirement to test applicants for places, applying positive discrimination to achieve an intake that shows a normal distribution of potential for academic achievement. The number of students recorded as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low, reflecting the college's policy in providing for individual needs without unnecessary labelling. The college serves a wide catchment area in Gateshead and surrounding districts; about two thirds of students come from areas that are economically and/or socially disadvantaged. The majority of students are from a white British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Emmanuel College is an outstanding school. Excellent standards achieved throughout the college are the result of focused teaching, determined attitudes and impressive support systems. These enable students to make progress at a rate that places the college among the most successful 5% of schools in England. Students appreciate their teachers' efforts, enjoy their work and are unfailingly supportive and courteous towards one another. Excellent behaviour and very high levels of attendance emphasise their desire to make the most of what the college offers them. Students feel safe and secure and, while expected to conform to the college's rules and expectations, are encouraged to express freely their own views and articulate personal feelings. They are offered a good, broad curriculum enhanced with vocational and work-related options; opportunities for business and enterprise are being developed.

What makes Emmanuel College remarkable is the extent to which stakeholders celebrate its achievements and endorse its methods yet retain a self-critical approach that seeks continuous improvement. All members of the community carry a card that states the college's mission statement and core values, among which is humility. This quality shines through senior leaders' self evaluation; while not falsely modest about the standards achieved, they genuinely feel that more could be done to prepare students for learning throughout their adult life and that some teachers could be more adventurous in how they present lessons. In fact, the quality of care, guidance and support for students is of the highest order, but it is true that some teaching could aim more consciously to promote students' independent thinking skills.

Senior leaders judge their own performance to be good, but not outstanding. Of course, the college is not perfect; yet inspectors were impressed throughout their visit by the positive views expressed by students, parents and staff alike. This unanimity could be sustained only by positive and sensitive leadership from the top; and there is no doubt in the minds of those interviewed, or in the overwhelmingly positive questionnaires returned by a significant number of parents, that the principal sets the tone for all that the college represents and achieves. The overall quality of leadership and management is indeed outstanding. As one student commented, the principal is 'approachable, and he's out there amongst it.' To parents, the college is 'patently the best school in the area', one that is 'incredibly well managed', that has 'set out to achieve specific goals and has done it.'

Grade: 1

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Sixth form provision is good overall, with some outstanding features in the quality of care, guidance and support offered to students. Students are set challenging targets and achieve very high standards, especially in relation to what they have achieved previously. The ethos of striving for one's personal best that prevails throughout the college is equally important in the sixth form. For the most part, students welcome this, commenting that they are aware of the sensitive support they receive and that there is a high level of mutual trust and respect between staff and students. Inevitably, there are occasional tensions when sixth form students feel they are not treated appropriately as young adults; one commented that senior managers 'should be able to trust us if we've been here since Year 7'. This is not a significant problem, however. Sixth form students recognise that they get a very good deal from the college in respect both of their day-to-day education and preparation for higher education or employment. They are full of praise for the accessibility and approachability of staff who manage the sixth form and of their skill in dealing with potentially awkward situations that may arise between teachers and students. Sixth formers are heavily involved in the extra-curricular life of the college and are encouraged to develop activities: one student, for example, received financial support in setting up a juggling club. Many sixth formers work with younger students as mentors or reading partners and take part alongside them in educational visits and sporting activities.

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards

Students consistently achieve outstandingly high academic standards at GCSE and A level and make excellent progress throughout the college. By the age of sixteen, most students achieve higher grades in a broader range of subjects than would have been expected, given test results achieved at the end of their primary schooling. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least the progress expected. Ninety six per cent of students gained five or more higher-grade passes at GCSE in 2005, a figure way above that achieved by most comprehensive schools. Almost all A level entries achieved passes, with two thirds graded A or B. More than nine out of ten 14-year-old students achieved the expected standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science, with significant numbers achieving higher levels in each subject. Despite these excellent results, areas for improvement have been identified, for example in helping lower achievers gain more higher grades at GCSE and in raising the proportion of A and A* grades after a slight drop in 2005.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

'The school provides a good foundation for society as it demonstrates, and promotes, confidence, self-esteem and good moral principles' – a comment typical of many written on questionnaires returned by parents. The specific Christian ethos of the college ensures that the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development lies at the heart of all that it does. 'My son has developed a keen sense of fairness and right/wrong,' wrote another parent. Spiritual issues are considered seriously on a daily basis in group worship and prayers; all students follow a GCSE course in religious education and sixth formers study an imaginative and thought-provoking compulsory course in philosophy, theology and ethics. Day-to-day relationships between all members of the college model its core values; they show very positive attitudes towards each other and their work. Rates of attendance are exceptionally high with virtually no unauthorised absence. Inevitably, students occasionally misbehave and are disciplined. Sanctions are carefully graded and students accept the fairness and consistency with which they are applied. In the words of a parent, 'we are particularly impressed by the management of behaviour in the school and the encouragement of positive and motivated attitudes. The school provides clear leadership for the children in its care and my child genuinely loves attending.'

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching throughout the college is good, and some lessons are outstanding. Systems for departmental monitoring and teacher appraisal ensure that staff are observed regularly and receive helpful feedback on the quality of their work. A wide-ranging programme of in-service training is available to meet identified needs and teachers increasingly share good practice among themselves. Some teaching could be less didactic and offer a broader range of challenges to the way students learn. The 'Engaging Minds' programme is being developed to address this concern. Most students work hard both in class and at tasks set for homework. They understand their targets and are keen to achieve them, responding eagerly to offers of additional help. The quality and presentation of work in exercise books underlines the pride students take in their achievement.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The curriculum is broad and balanced while supporting the college's status as a technology college with a developing specialism in business and enterprise. Students understand the importance of this development, one commenting that 'we have to speak and present ourselves at all times in a manner that would make us employable.' There is excellent provision for students to select vocational and work-related subjects. The curriculum is enhanced by many teachers' willingness to give freely of their time in providing additional classes or activities after the school day and in holidays, and students reciprocate with high levels of participation and commitment. Curriculum evenings for parents are popular and well attended.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The college provides outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for all its students. The pastoral recording system is readily accessible to staff so that individual students' needs are known and can be attended to promptly by the most appropriate person. Much time is invested in ensuring that parents and students are well informed about subject choices, targets and progress. Very high levels of attendance at parents' evenings are recorded; any concerns are immediately noted, discussed and followed up. The management of provision for students in need of learning support was a comparative weakness at the time of the previous inspection. This issue has been successfully addressed and a number of parents commented on gains in confidence, and improved progress, made by their children since joining the college. A typical reaction is that of the parent who wrote that 'my son is in one of the lower sets and before joining the school, friends had voiced how he might feel under pressure in such an outstanding school in relation to results. I am thrilled that this has been the complete opposite. My son is learning that effort and pride bring about self-worth and their own rewards.' Systems for ensuring the safety and protection of students are first-rate; one student interviewed stated categorically, 'the thing is, from day one you're safe.' Other students were adamant that, should bullying occur, staff would listen sensitively to any concerns and that the issue would be resolved very quickly and firmly.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

As this entire report shows, leadership and management are outstanding in the positive impact they have on the work of the college and of the outcomes it achieves. The senior team works effectively as a unit and its contribution to the success of the college is genuinely valued by other staff; one head of department said, 'It's a great team that manages us from above.'

Departmental and college development plans are cogent and relevant with a clear focus on 'winning hearts' as well as improving academic standards. The vision is transmitted with absolute clarity; one of the newest members of staff commented, 'Character first – that's what we're interested in.'

Middle managers are acutely aware of increasing accountability for the performance of their teams and that alongside accountability goes a greater freedom to contribute to the development of the college. They relish this challenge and, like the senior team, enjoy working together. Capacity to improve is excellent at all levels of leadership and management, both in recognising where improvements can be made and in the ability to deliver those improvements effectively and efficiently.

Grade: 1

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</i>	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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	N/A	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

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	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health.	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community.	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	Yes

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28 Mar 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming my colleague and I when we visited your college recently. We enjoyed talking to a number of you and appreciated your honesty and openness in answering our questions. You were very helpful in directing us to classrooms and in telling us about your work when we spoke to you in lessons.

We believe that you are very fortunate: Emmanuel College is an outstanding school. It provides you with a safe, caring and well-ordered environment where the staff help you to achieve excellent test and examination results and to prepare for adult life. We were impressed by the extent to which you recognise and appreciate what is done for you and by the level of care and respect that is evident between everyone in the college.

Mr Winch and his colleagues want to make Emmanuel College even more successful. They are thinking about ways of involving you more actively in learning; we are sure that you will be keen to take advantage of any new opportunities you are offered.

We would like to wish you every success for the future. We hope that Emmanuel College goes from strength to strength and that you continue to flourish as members of its community.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector