

Clough Hall Technology School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124403
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359660
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Cladingbowl HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	708
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Steventon
Headteacher	Ian R Tait
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2008
School address	First Avenue Kidsgrove Stoke-on-Trent ST7 1DP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 29 lesson or part lessons taught by 27 teachers, and met with groups of students, the chair of governors and school staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at key school documents, including the school development plan and information about students' progress, and took account of student, staff and 25 parental responses to questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well the higher ability students are being taught.
- Why students' progress in mathematics has been weaker than in other subjects.
- Why outcomes for sixth form students are better in some subjects than in others.
- How much the school and the sixth form have improved since the last inspection.

Information about the school

Clough Hall Technology School and Sixth Form College is smaller than average. The sixth form is run in partnership with a neighbouring high school. Nearly all students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as a second language. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities varies between year groups but is average overall. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school has held specialist school status since 2000. It holds Healthy School Status, the Artsmark award and is an International School.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Clough Hall is a good school. Strong and determined leadership, over the last few years, has transformed the school into a lively and inclusive school community, which is based on outstanding support and care for students and high aspirations for their future.

Overall students achieve good or better outcomes during their time at school. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly average or better even though starting points for many students are low. A higher than average number of students continues into training, further education or employment. Students' attendance is much higher than average, reflecting students' positive attitudes to school, and their behaviour in and around the school is good. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, are supported and taught well and they make good progress. Students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school, and the wider community, and they are exceptionally well prepared for the world of work. Students feel very safe when they are in school.

Leaders and managers at the school are committed to students achieving the very best that they can. A rich mix of projects and initiatives such as: those involving the students in enhancing the school site; the very well used and nationally acknowledged Bistro; the students' weekly contributions to senior management team meetings; the early morning 'master classes' in teaching; and innovations to the curriculum, are improving opportunities for students and the facilities at the school. Teaching is generally good and subject leaders and middle managers have improved the way they use assessment to support learning, which in turn has strengthened the quality of lesson planning and increased the rate of students' progress.

The school knows itself well and has good capacity for further improvement. In a number of areas, for instance in relation to attendance, management information has been used very effectively to assess the impact of the actions taken to improve students' outcomes. In a few areas, for example in mathematics, information about students' progress has not always been analysed early enough to identify and act on weaknesses. Consequently, outcomes have been weaker in mathematics although they are improving.

In the sixth form, students are making adequate progress. The quality of care, support and guidance offered to students is very good and the sixth form provides good opportunities for students to continue their education and training after the age of 16. Until now, shortcomings in teaching and learning have not always been identified early enough to rectify them in time and this has led to uneven rates of

progress across subjects. Recent appointments have strengthened the quality of the work of the leaders and managers in the sixth form, which is good, and the sixth form partnership arrangements are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and managers make better use of management information, including information about the students' progress, to evaluate:
 - the impact of new initiatives on improving outcomes for students
 - where teaching and learning needs to improve further.
- Improve students' outcomes in the sixth form by increasing the frequency of checks on:
 - how well students are being taught
 - the rate of each students' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students arrive at school with levels of attainment that are below average overall but most make good progress, including in English and functional mathematics, so that they leave school having achieved well. In some subjects, for example in technology, students obtain good GCSE qualifications one or even two years early. While they usually do well in GCSE examinations, not all of the higher attaining students make as much progress during their time in school as they could. GCSE results in mathematics have been too low although students' progress in this subject has quickened.

In most lessons visited by inspectors, and in the students' books, the work being tackled was suitable for the students' ages and abilities. Students were diligent and persevered when they found work difficult. In some lessons, including in a small number of mathematics lessons, students were working above the standard expected for their age. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well. Students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable do as well as their peers, as do the very few students who either speak English as an additional language or who are from a minority ethnic group.

Students feel very safe in school. They are confident that incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and they appreciate the priority afforded by the school to their well being. Most students are aware of the need to live a healthy lifestyle, including by exercising regularly and eating well. Behaviour is good in lessons and it is good around the school. Students welcome the clear guidance they are given by the school about how they are expected to behave and they are usually responsive to the needs and feelings of others. At break and lunchtimes, supervision is plentiful and this helps students manage their own behaviour well. Between lessons, students move around the site safely and sensibly.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and to the local and wider community. Inter-generational lunches, for example, fund raising for local causes, enterprise activities involving local people, and tidying campaigns have all

helped to foster excellent relationships with local residents and a good understanding of their concerns. In the school itself, students are keen to take on responsibility as prefects, by taking on leadership roles, through initiating and responding enthusiastically to change, or by helping in their own time with projects to improve the school's facilities and grounds.

Students are very well prepared for the future world of work. The school places emphasis on being ready for the world of work, including through vocational subjects, lessons in functional mathematics, targets for social interaction and behaviour in lessons, special days for teamwork and leadership activities, as well as through the more usual opportunities for work placements and experience. Attendance is outstanding and absence rates have fallen steadily. A high proportion of students go into training, employment or continue with their studies after leaving school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and most make regular use of assessment information to identify what students need to learn, understand or be able to do next. This gives coherence to learning and helps students make good progress. Support for low-attaining students, and those with special educational needs, is plentiful although some lessons miss opportunities to extend learning for the higher attaining students.

In the very best lessons seen by inspectors, teachers made learning fun and challenged students to achieve beyond the expected, usually by allowing students to take part in practical or realistic learning activities. Students responded to these

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

opportunities with exceptional enjoyment, for example when being asked to work as a writer, a scientist, or a construction worker. In these lessons, teaching focused not only on how much, but also on how well, students were learning. In a few lessons, where teachers did most of the talking, students were less enthusiastic.

Students have access to a very good range of curriculum opportunities, inside and outside of lessons. Aspects of the curriculum are outstanding, including for example the vocational opportunities and the programme of functional skills at Key Stage 3; the widespread practice of early entry for GCSE examinations; NVO courses in construction and hospitality and catering; and the teaching of synthetic phonics to a small number of younger students who have special educational needs. Most of the younger students benefit from an integrated curriculum in Year 7 too, although it can limit opportunities for the higher attaining students to pursue a particular interest or to be taught by a specialist teacher. Links with a local college and other schools mean that a wide range of courses are available to students at Key Stage 4. A variety of trips and visits, including excursions abroad, and community events and social gatherings, complement more formal learning, broaden students’ horizons, and widen their aspirations.

Arrangements for the care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. Students praise unreservedly the care and support provided by the school and its staff. Vulnerable students are cared for well, including those that are looked after by the local authority, and the school works with outside agencies to ensure that these students receive the support that they need to make good progress. In Year 7, the curriculum helps students to settle in well and to forge new friendships. As they move through the school, students are given comprehensive guidance that helps them to make informed choices about what courses to study in Key Stage 4.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Over the last five years, senior leaders at the school have demonstrated commendably strong ambition for the students and worked successfully to build a powerful ethos in the school, which couples strong care with a focus on achieving better outcomes. Notable improvements in attendance and behaviour, and more recent improvements in teaching and learning, have led to better examination results and greater opportunities for students. In the sixth form, improvement has been slower.

Middle managers are playing a greater role in leading improvement activity, and other elements of the school’s work, than they did at the time of the last inspection,

including by improving the use of assessment in teaching. Not all senior and middle managers, however, are using management information as well as they could to direct available resources to improvement activity. For example, initiatives taken to improve the school are not always evaluated to see what impact they have on student achievement; exclusion figures are not used to establish what might be done to improve behaviour further; and information about students' progress has not always been analysed and acted on quickly enough.

The school is aware of its responsibility to promote community cohesion. It reaches out to and holds a pivotal place in the local community, drawing people together, and its facilities are used very well by local residents. Although they are taught about different religions and cultures in school, and although the school has strong links with a school in Gambia, students have less direct knowledge and understanding of the diverse faiths, traditions and customs of other people living closer to home.

The governing body, which is very well led, knows the school well and keeps a close eye on the performance of most aspects of the school. It is, in the main, provided with the information it needs to hold the school to account although the weakest aspects of performance are not always given full attention. It understands and discharges its responsibility for safeguarding students adequately, including by instituting the necessary checks. Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff are satisfactory.

Despite poor buildings overall, the school and its governing body have used financial resources shrewdly to enhance the learning environment, although some areas of the site remain uninviting.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes to learning and are making the

progress expected of them, although sixth form examination results have varied from year to year. The attendance of students is very good and the sixth form has an ethos of exceptional care and support, which reflects that found in the main school, and this means that students in the sixth form develop into confident young adults who are generally very well prepared for life.

The quality of teaching, and its impact on the progress made by sixth form students, is uneven. While lessons are often good, teaching is not checked regularly enough to make sure that it is consistently good or better in all sixth form subjects so that students achieve the best possible outcomes. Courses, programmes and activities for students are generally well matched to students' different needs, including through the partnership with Mary Hill High School. Leaders and managers in the sixth form work well together to plan strategically, strengthen collaboration and improve consistency across the sixth form.

Sixth form students make an important contribution to the wider life of the school as a whole, for example by volunteering and leading events in the school and wider community, and they demonstrate sensibility and maturity in managing their own behaviour and their work as well as in their relationships with others.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

During this inspection, very few parents responded to the parental questionnaire. The school takes good account of the views of parents and carers, however, seeking them regularly and acting on findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Clough Hall Technology School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 708 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	28	16	64	1	4	1	4
The school keeps my child safe	9	36	16	64	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	36	14	56	2	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	20	18	72	1	4	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	5	20	17	68	3	12	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	12	17	68	5	20	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	20	18	72	2	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	4	16	19	76	2	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	16	18	72	2	8	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	12	21	84	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	16	14	56	6	24	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	4	16	18	72	3	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	16	18	72	2	8	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Clough Hall Technology School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 1DP

Thank you for your hospitality when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit. Our inspection judged that Clough Hall is a good school and you have played a very important part in achieving this. We were particularly impressed by:

- your excellent attendance and your good behaviour
- the contribution you make to the school and the local community
- the support given to you by adults in the school and the way you are kept safe
- the lessons that get you actively involved in discussing and doing
- the way you are helped to prepare for the world of work and for your future.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- make sure they check regularly that all the improvements they are making to the school, including to teaching, result in even better progress and outcomes for you.

You can help to improve your school further by:

- being as enthusiastic as you can about all your lessons
- being as ambitious for yourself as your teachers are for you.

With all best wishes for the future,

Michael Cladingbowl

Her Majesty's Inspector

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