

# Mildenhall College of Technology

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124809
<b>Local Authority</b>	SUFFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	315069
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Alder HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	960
6th form	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Gray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Terry Lewis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Bury Road Mildenhall Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP28 7HT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01638 714645
<b>Fax number</b>	01638 510184

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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

The school is situated in a rural area 13 miles north of Bury St Edmunds. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is smaller than average. The proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have statements of educational need is also smaller than average.

The school has been awarded specialist status for both technology and vocational education.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school's effectiveness is good and ensures that pupils make good progress in their work. Two aspects of the school's work in particular bring this about. First, the curriculum is good, with a wide range of vocational courses on offer. Pupils therefore take courses in which they are more likely to achieve well. Secondly, the school has a very effective method of tracking pupils' progress. This enables the school's leaders to identify which pupils are falling behind and need extra help. As a result, mentoring and the provision of a considerable number of extra lessons are arranged for underachieving pupils.

Changes in the management of English, mathematics and science have led to improvements in pupils' performance. All groups of pupils make good progress, although the number achieving the highest grades at GCSE is currently below the national average. The quality of teaching varies; in some lessons it is lively and exhilarating but in others is sometimes unexciting and insufficiently demanding. There are some examples of good, detailed marking but there is some inconsistency in this.

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and it has improved in recent years as a result of the school's efforts. The ways in which pupils are prepared for their future economic well-being is good. An example is the teaching of literacy and numeracy to those who were not making sufficient progress with these skills. Pupils also make a good contribution to the community. Their understanding of how to be healthy and how this affects their own lives is good. A significant number of parents are critical of behaviour at the school. However, inspectors found that it is satisfactory overall. Pupils work cooperatively in lessons and move round the site in an orderly manner. They say that bullying is rare and dealt with quickly and effectively if it happens. Pupils say they feel safe at school but a few report that they have suffered racist comments from others. While the number of such incidents has been reduced markedly, they have not been entirely eliminated.

The school's specialist status has been a driving force behind the development of a more technological and vocational curriculum. This in turn has contributed to the raising of standards and achievement. Specialist status funding has been used to improve resources, including the provision of interactive whiteboards but these are underused. There is more widespread use of and access to information and computer technology (ICT) by pupils. The school engages well with the community and in particular works closely with its primary partners to develop expertise in its specialist subjects. The majority of the specialist school technology targets have been consistently achieved, though they are challenging, but the science target has yet to be met.

Some parents say that the school takes insufficient account of their views and those of their children and that staff are sometimes unresponsive or difficult to contact.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

There are particular strengths in the care and guidance of students and in the range of courses provided. The students feel well supported, though they would value better study facilities. Standards in examinations are broadly average, though with some variation between subjects. This represents satisfactory progress for students.

Personal development is good. Students take considerable responsibility through their active involvement in school affairs including the school and year councils and by mentoring and supporting younger pupils.

The curriculum is particularly good in providing general and vocational courses as well as personal and social education, general studies and basic skills programmes. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned though they do not always encourage students to be active learners. Some teaching and learning lacks sufficient challenge to enable students to reach the higher grades. Leadership and management are good, reflected in successful efforts to enhance course provision and carefully track student progress.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching and the marking of pupils' work so that all groups of pupils make more progress in lessons and enjoy their learning.
- Improve behaviour further and take further steps to eliminate racist comments from a minority of pupils.
- Ensure that the school's communications with parents and pupils improve so that their concerns are sought and responded to effectively.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

When pupils arrive in Year 9 their standards are broadly average and remain so at the end of Year 9, indicating that the progress they make is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11 their standards are above average, showing that progress is good. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science pupils' performance in the 2007 GCSE examinations was below average. However, tracking data provided by the school indicates that they are now making better progress and standards are rising. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have statements of special educational need make above average progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Behaviour has improved over the last few years and is satisfactory overall. The school is effective in limiting any disruptive behaviour and the number of pupil exclusions is falling. Good links with external agencies are helping the small number who need it to develop strategies to control their behaviour. The vast majority of pupils are friendly and polite.

The school has achieved 'Healthy Schools' status. Pupils know how to lead healthy lives. They eat healthily and take regular exercise. Many voluntarily take part in extra-curricular sports. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community, particularly through their fund-raising for charities. School council representatives take their responsibilities seriously but they are not as influential as they would like to be. Sixth formers play an important role in helping younger pupils feel safe. Work experience, vocational education, the standards achieved in ICT and the development of skills in functional literacy and numeracy prepare pupils well for the world of work.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in both the main school and sixth form. The school has a core of very talented and inspirational teachers whose high expectations of and concern for pupils' progress is reflected in very thorough planning, varied and exciting teaching and regular and constructive assessment. However, too many lessons lack the necessary features to engage pupils sufficiently to ensure good progress. The pace of work and the degree of challenge in many lessons is generally only satisfactory. Pupils are capable of more challenging work, not least those who are of high ability. Pupils are not used to taking responsibility for their own learning and academic progress. Most lessons are soundly planned but pupils are not always told clearly what they are going to learn in a lesson. This makes it difficult for them to know what to focus on and to enable them to check their own progress. In general not enough emphasis is given to checking that pupils have made sufficient progress. The thoroughness and helpfulness of marking in books is too variable. However, some very good marking of pupils' assessments shows clearly, and in some detail, how pupils should improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school's curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. The school has worked hard to match the curriculum to the needs and interests of pupils of different abilities and this has contributed to improved standards and achievement. It also prepares them well for future employment. All pupils in Year 10 and 11 take at least one vocational subject and have a period of work experience. Courses to develop literacy and numeracy are provided in Years 10 and 11 and similar provision is made for the sixth form. For those who would benefit, there is a work-related programme. This includes work experience and a college placement. Pupils who need extra work in some areas have an individually designed learning programme.

There is a comprehensive curriculum for personal and social education, which includes health and citizenship education. In practice, its impact is limited by the fact that the teaching of it is too variable in quality. There is a good range of enrichment activities.

### Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

When they join the school, pupils settle in very well. This is a result of the good transfer arrangements from middle school. There is extensive and successful use of learning mentors to support vulnerable and underachieving pupils. Underachievement is identified well by the school's tracking system. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language receive effective support. Vulnerable pupils benefit from the school's thoughtful use of professional services provided by specialist outside agencies. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are secure and widely understood.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school's headteacher and other senior leaders are well focused on the drive to improve standards. This is evident, for example, by the thoroughness of their support for those leaders who are responsible for the English, mathematics and science departments. A good system has been developed by which the quality of provision in different departments is monitored. This includes observations of lessons as well as scrutinies of pupils' work and has led to some particularly acute observations of departments' strengths and weaknesses. It is evident that this is leading to improvements, along with the good system for checking on pupils' progress. However the effectiveness of this work is reduced because some of the evaluations, for example of the quality of teaching and of pupils' personal development, are too generous.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources is satisfactory. This is because of time required to run a good number of extra classes in order to ensure that pupils' progress is good.

Governors visit the school regularly and are linked to departments, which helps them to get to know the school. They give freely of their time to support the staff and pupils. However, they do not scrutinise data sufficiently well, such as exclusions and attendance of ethnic groups, in order to influence further improvement.

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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	3
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mildenhall College of Technology, Mildenhall, IP28 7HT

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We met a good number of you and spoke to more of you in lessons and around school. We found you to be helpful.

We found that yours is a good school. A lot of effort is put into making sure that you do well in your examinations. The good curriculum, which is designed to take into account your different interests and abilities, is one reason for your success. Another is the careful tracking of your progress and the extra lessons which are put on to make sure that you do well. We found out that your approach to healthy living is good and that you make a good contribution to the community. Your school has worked hard to make sure that your attendance is satisfactory, and we were pleased to see that it is improving well.

One thing that came out when we spoke to you was that your enjoyment of school is not particularly strong. This is partly because lessons, which are usually at least satisfactory, are not always stimulating enough or move at a fast enough pace. You feel that behaviour is satisfactory, and we agree with that. We noticed that behaviour between lessons and at lunchtimes was fine, but in some lessons there was some unnecessary chatting. Some racist comments have been aimed at your fellow pupils who have joined the school from overseas. The number of incidents has reduced but needs to cease. Finally, we agreed with comments about your views and those of your parents needing to be responded to better. We have asked your school to look at those areas and to bring about improvements.

Of course, you can help to improve your education too. Continue to make sure that you attend regularly, talk to those who chat in lessons and explain that it is not helping you to learn and report any poor behaviour including any racism. That way you can help make a good school even better.

Best wishes for your future

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector.