

# Community College Whitstable

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118803
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379685
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Metcalf

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>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	855
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	156
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Cooke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helena Sullivan-Tighe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11–12 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Bellevue Road Whitstable CT5 1PX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01227 272362
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 30 lessons and 30 teachers. They held meetings with staff, students and members of the governing body. They looked at a range of data and documentation, including the college's self-evaluation form, college policies, development plans, assessment data, safeguarding documentation and minutes of meetings of the governing body. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 57 parents and carers were also analysed.

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

- The extent to which lesson observations, work scrutiny and available data support the college's judgments about attainment and progress.
- Whether the quality of teaching is securing sufficient progress and learning for all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The impact of leaders in quickly driving and securing improvement, and the college's capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

The college is an average-sized non-selective school in a selective area. Students are predominantly of White British heritage and the proportion of students with English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The college has specialist mathematics and computing status and has gained an International School Award. The college's Investors in People quality mark was renewed in 2010.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The Community College Whitstable is a good school. Strong leadership and management at all levels have brought about significant key improvements since the college was last inspected. The college's leadership team is clear about what needs to be done to improve further, and the governing body makes a strong contribution to ensure that the work of the college is kept constantly under review. As a result, outcomes for students of all abilities are good and improving.

Attainment is broadly average and students make increasingly good progress on the basis of their prior attainment, which is often low. Unvalidated data from the 2011 examination results and the robust assessment evidence relating to current Year 11 students confirm that attainment is rising and that learning and progress are good. The proportion of students attaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is rising at a faster rate than seen nationally. The quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of improved performance, and the college's drive for high-quality teaching is evident in the continual and very successful review of classroom practice, based upon close monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. An increasing number of lessons are outstanding and there are very few which are inadequate. Nevertheless, college leaders are aware of the need to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, particularly with regard to the level of support and challenge provided to match students' ability levels.

Teachers and other college staff know students very well as individuals, and outstanding care, guidance and support contribute greatly to students' security, enjoyment, participation and achievement. Behaviour is good and students say it has improved significantly, with reducing numbers of exclusions. Attendance is improving and is now average, with a decreasing number of persistent absentees. Student Inclusion Leaders work relentlessly with students to encourage attendance at college, making use of home visits, personalised timetables and, in exceptional circumstances, the use of penalty notices.

The headteacher and senior leadership team are passionate, determined and effective. Their vision for the college is shared by staff, students and the community, as well as member of the governing body who are effective in supporting and challenging the college as a result of their regular monitoring visits. Engagement with parents and carers is outstanding and the college makes every effort to ensure their involvement and their commitment. Safeguarding is outstanding; the college is

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recognised as a beacon of exemplary practice, offering support and advice to neighbouring schools and colleges. Outcomes for students in the sixth form are currently satisfactory but, as a result of improved provision, attainment and progress are now on an upward trend. There is a culture of high expectations and an impressive track record of improvement which, together with the college's accurate assessment of its own strengths and priorities, means that the college has a good capacity to continue to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons across the college by ensuring that:
  - features of outstanding teaching are identified and shared across all departments
  - all teachers take sufficient account of the spread of ability within classes in order to support lower attainers and challenge higher attainers
  - students participate more actively in their learning through independent and collaborative work.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Students' attainment on entry to the college is below average and their progress is good; this is confirmed by lesson observations and the proportion of students exceeding the college's challenging targets. The college's detailed assessment data confirm that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other groups as a result of the college's well-matched provision to individual needs. The performance of boys and girls is similar, with no discernible trends over time. Students' achievement overall is good.

Students enjoy college. They conduct themselves well around college and in lessons so that learning is rarely impeded by inappropriate behaviour. Previously high exclusion rates are falling and the college works hard with challenging students to support them back into the classroom or to arrange provision in alternative establishments. In the large majority of lessons, students show positive attitudes to their learning and enjoy respectful relationships with their teachers and their peers. Students say they feel safe, adopt healthy lifestyles and take part in exercise and sporting activities.

The college provides many opportunities for involvement in the wider community, such as engagement in the student leadership teams and membership of the Kent Youth Council. Students take an active role in the decisions made in college through the school council, including the development of the vocational centre and the introduction of mixed-age tutor groups. Students have a secure awareness of their career options and they are well prepared for further education and the world of work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with particular

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strengths in moral and social development. Spiritual development is well supported through assemblies and religious education, and cultural awareness is promoted through citizenship, which introduces them to different cultures and beliefs, thus encouraging understanding and respect.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

There is a clear and demonstrable track record of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Supportive relationships, improved use of data and a focus on progress were strong features of the lessons observed. The best lessons were effective in supporting lower attaining students and challenging those who are potentially higher attaining. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, tailored questioning was used very effectively to cater for the spread of ability in the class so that all students felt challenged and made progress from their individual starting points. However, this excellent practice is not widespread, and occasionally not enough attention is paid to matching work precisely to students’ individual needs. In a small minority of lessons; ‘teacher talk’ dominated lessons and opportunities for independent and collaborative work were diminished.

Assessment is good and data are used effectively to track the progress of individual students and support any who are underperforming. Self- and peer assessment is a feature of many lessons, such as in a Year 10 English lesson when students assessed one another, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This allowed them to focus on their learning and make outstanding progress as a result. Marking in books

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

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is regular and detailed but not always focused on subject-specific targets.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a broad and balanced offer which is well suited to students. This includes project-based learning in Years 7 and 8, highlighting the development of skills in literacy, numeracy, computing, enterprise, citizenship and problem solving. There is a good mix of traditional and vocational subjects, including construction and beauty therapy, which provide appropriate pathways for many students. The specialisms of mathematics and computing support other subjects well, including the use of mathematics in geography and computing in creative subjects.

Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute significantly to students’ emotional well-being, self-esteem and confidence. Students are highly complimentary about the quality of support provided by staff. They say how much they appreciate that they are known well as individuals and that their different needs are suitably catered for. Transition arrangements are excellent as a result of the strong links with partner primary schools and the focus on preparing students for further education and the world of work. Partnerships with external agencies are strong, offering additional and personalised support for the most vulnerable students and their families.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leadership team have very high expectations for the college which are suitably shared and acknowledged by staff, students and the community. Self-evaluation and improvement planning make it very clear where improvements are needed, and who is responsible for ensuring that ambitious targets will be met. Targeted professional development focused on teaching, learning and assessment has had a considerable and positive impact on improving attainment and progress. The college has been involved in collaborative professional development days with other schools as well as developing staff through a variety of courses; this work is recognised as part of the college’s accreditation as an Investor in People.

Members of the governing body have an excellent understanding of the college’s work as a result of their rigorous and regular monitoring visits which are used to

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inform strategic planning. They understand their roles in providing challenge and support for the college, and are highly effective in promoting and supporting continued improvement. The governing body discharges its statutory duties effectively and ensures that the college’s excellent safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. The college enjoys highly positive relationships with parents and carers as a result of determined efforts to engage them, using a variety of means of communication, including the college’s website. The family forum is a regular opportunity to meet with parents and carers and discuss ways to support their children, including topics such as succeeding in examinations and how assessment works. Training is also provided on the use of the college’s ‘Learning Gateway’, which enables students and their parents and carers to access up-to-date assessment results, reports, targets, attendance data and homework.

Extensive partnerships enhance the college’s provision and make outstanding contributions to the development and well-being of students. The students themselves work well together and integrate successfully in mixed-age tutor groups. This is an inclusive college, where equality of opportunity is well embedded and discrimination tackled effectively. Community cohesion is good and the college offers many opportunities to engage with other schools and organisations locally, including the Canterbury Festival and the Thanet Music Festival, as well as student workshops in partner primary schools, linked to the college’s specialism. International exchanges, with schools in Denmark, France, Germany, Greenland, Holland, Sweden and the Czech Republic have helped the school gain International School status, as well as ensuring that students have a wide appreciation of diversity and culture.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## Sixth form

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress from their starting points and attainment is broadly average. Examination results have improved since the last inspection and continue to rise. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory but improving rapidly. Retention rates are rising steadily and the number of students enrolled is increasing. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships are supportive and teachers know their students well. Students enjoy their lessons and receive regular quality feedback on their progress, with helpful comments on how to improve.

The curriculum matches students’ abilities well with clear pathways which are personalised for the increasing numbers entering the sixth form. Care, guidance and support are strong and students benefit considerably from high levels of personal and academic support which are raising their aspirations. Leadership and management are good, with evidence of decisive action taken to address under-performance, including tighter entry requirements for those wishing to stay on in the sixth form and better monitoring of the quality of teaching. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of these arrangements on outcomes for students, particularly in terms of improved examination results.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

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

## Views of parents and carers

Given the size of the college, only a small minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires, although those returned fully endorsed the findings of the college’s own surveys. Most parents and carers say that the college keeps their children safe and meets their needs. They are happy with their children’s experience at the college. They confirmed their confidence in the teaching and felt that the college was well led and managed, with additional comments focused on recent improvements and inspirational leadership. A few commented on staff turnover, which is managed well by the college. A small minority of responses raised concerns about behaviour but inspectors found that behaviour was good, with clear procedures for dealing with any instances of unacceptable behaviour.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Community College Whitstable 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 855 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	33	32	56	5	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	44	29	51	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	20	35	29	51	7	12	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	33	30	53	6	11	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	13	23	36	63	6	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	15	26	29	51	12	21	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	12	38	67	8	14	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)	13	23	35	61	5	9	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	28	32	56	5	9	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	25	30	53	9	16	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	19	31	54	10	18	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	21	39	68	4	7	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	22	39	28	49	6	11	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



5 November 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Community College Whitstable, Whitstable, CT5 1PX**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we recently visited your college. We appreciated the help you gave us in finding our way around and we enjoyed meeting and talking to you in your lessons and around the college. Thank you for telling us about your college as well as answering the questionnaires, confirming that you feel safe, know how well you are doing and feel that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job.

We have taken into account your views and those of your parents and carers, and of college staff, in arriving at our judgement that your college is good. Examination results are improving and you are making good progress in your academic and personal development. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the curriculum is broad and balanced. We think that that leadership and management are good, and that care, guidance and support are outstanding.

We have asked your teachers to continue their work on improving the quality of teaching. We have suggested that greater account is taken of the spread of ability in classes and that you all should be encouraged to participate more actively in your learning through individual and group work. We know that this already happens in your best lessons, but we want to see this good practice shared across the college. You can all play your part by attending college regularly and taking advantage of the educational opportunities which it offers.

Once again, thank you all for your contribution to the inspection and very best wishes for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf  
Lead inspector

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