

# Minsthorpe Community College, A Specialist Science College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	137011
<b>Local authority</b>	Not applicable
<b>Inspection number</b>	385564
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Lynne Blakelock

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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,750
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	248
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steven Parkinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Gregory
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Minsthorpe Lane South Elmsall WF9 2UJ
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<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@minsthorpe.wakefield.sch.uk

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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock  
James McGrath  
Sally Lane  
Nigel Pressnell  
Cathy Morgan

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 47 teachers in 48 lessons, over approximately 24 hours. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, with groups of students, and with members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the college's work, and looked at data about the achievement of all groups of students throughout the college, its improvement planning, and policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of the students. They analysed the 287 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

## Information about the college

This very large college, compared to others of its type, converted to an academy on 1 August 2011. A very large majority of students are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. A well-above average proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs, most of which relate to behavioural issues or moderate learning difficulties.

The college works in collaboration with Hemsworth Arts and Community College and with the Wakefield South-East Training and Enterprise Centre to extend its provision for sixth-form students. It has specialist science status. The college site incorporates The Happy Days Children's Centre, which was subject to a separate inspection.

Recently, the college has been awarded three awards for the third time; Investors in People status, Charter Mark, and the Basic Skills Award. The school meets the current floor standard.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory college. The sixth form is satisfactory. While students’ behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are good, their achievement, the quality of teaching, and leadership and management are satisfactory. The college is no better than satisfactory because there are inconsistencies in teaching practices which hinder the pace of students’ progress, especially in mathematics. Leaders and managers at all levels do not all have a fully accurate picture of the college’s performance and strategies are not constantly reviewed to determine their continued effectiveness.
- The achievement of all groups of students throughout the college is satisfactory. Progress in English throughout the college is good because teaching is consistently good.
- While there is some good and outstanding teaching, too much is satisfactory and results in students’ satisfactory progress throughout the college and sixth form. Teaching informs students consistently of the skills needed to move to the next level and ensures that students understand the purpose of learning. Activities do not regularly match accurately the levels at which the students are working in order to accelerate their progress. While some marking is extremely helpful in informing students what they have achieved and how to improve in their learning, there is little evidence that this advice is carried out.
- The behaviour and safety of the students are good. Their attendance is high. There is a supportive ethos through the college that promotes students’ security and well-being.
- Leadership and management of the college and sixth form are satisfactory. This includes the leadership of teaching, which is leading to improvements in teaching practices. Appropriate strategies are in place to improve the college and to sustain improvements. In particular, performance management targets for the staff are aligned closely to the college’s priorities.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Raise standards and accelerate progress throughout the college, particularly in mathematics and including the sixth form, by making sure that:
  - work for students of all abilities is an accurate match for their needs
  - marking regularly tells students their achievements and the next steps in learning
  - teachers' planning builds-in ample time in lessons for students to learn independently
  - the best teaching practice is shared with other staff.
- Strengthen the impact of senior and middle leaders in driving improvement, by making sure that:
  - they have and sustain a full and accurate understanding of the quality and impact of the college's practices and performance, through very regular and detailed monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of its work
  - findings from monitoring result in common priorities throughout the school, which are reviewed constantly to ensure their effectiveness.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

A very large majority of students speak enthusiastically about learning. Their parents and carers believe that they make good progress throughout the college. However, inspection evidence shows that most students make satisfactory progress through the college, including through the sixth form.

Students enter Year 7 with standards that vary from year to year. In recent years, many have started with below-average standards compared to most students of their age. There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of students represented in the college. Those students who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and students known to be eligible for free school meals, make progress at least at the rate of other students. Careful and specific support promotes their greater confidence and self-esteem and, therefore, their willingness to participate in lessons and wider college activities. Some boys, including in the sixth form, make slower progress than other groups in mathematics, but this is being tackled and the gap is narrowing.

The proportion of students achieving at least five A\* to C grades is above average, while the proportion reaching five A\* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, is in line with standards nationally. Standards in English are above average, due to more consistently good teaching throughout the college. Mathematics' standards have declined over recent years, but appropriate strategies, ranging from additional staffing to specific support groups, are resulting in improving levels of achievement and satisfactory progress.

Although most students make satisfactory progress in mathematics, in a Year 9 lesson, they made outstanding progress in their understanding of inequalities. At the same time, they showed excellent literacy skills through their accurate use of terminology. While literacy is being established across the curriculum, students made good progress in both science and literacy in a lesson that resulted in them being able to give informed opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of cloning.

Students in Year 12 and 13 make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Recent results show that achievement is improving in academic subjects, thereby narrowing the gap between academic and vocational levels of performance. For example, a mixed-ability group of students made good progress in researching topics and selecting appropriate information for a specific purpose.

### **Quality of teaching**

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire believe that teaching is good. Inspection evidence shows that teaching during the inspection and over time is satisfactory because of its varied quality. In the sixth form, teaching is also satisfactory. As throughout the college, some teaching is good, typified by teachers who have good subject knowledge and who ensure that students understand the grade criteria for examination success.

Teaching, regularly, incorporates students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, both through planned curriculum opportunities and those arising from students' comments and thoughts. Texts are used well to bring out, for example, types of prejudice and the range of emotions that people can feel in a given situation. The excellent 'Learning Partners' initiative enables the college to have regular feedback from students about teaching.

Most students' positive attitudes to learning help lessons to start promptly. In the best lessons, the introduction involves the students so that they are engaged quickly in their learning. In an outstanding Year 10 English lesson, the students were given one minute to produce out of plasticine, an image that portrayed the essence of a character from a text. The imaginative responses demonstrated excellent prior knowledge. Very high-quality learning continued as the students focused on tasks that were a close match to the levels at which they were working. In numerous other lessons, expectations of students' work were not high enough, the level of challenge was not matched accurately to their needs, the pace of learning was not brisk enough to maintain concentration fully and there were not enough opportunities to learn independently.

Students benefit from extremely helpful marking in some lessons, which tells them clearly the next steps to take and what they have achieved. In some lessons, students' progress is hampered by brief and vague marking. There is little evidence that students take on board the advice given to them in subsequent work. Throughout the curriculum, computer-based learning is used effectively to reinforce students' understanding.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Most students' behaviour is consistently good, both in lessons and around the college. The college's records show that this is the case over time. A very small minority of parents and carers and students felt that sometimes lessons were spoilt by poor behaviour. Inspection

evidence found that behaviour in lessons was good, but the Principal has been made aware of parents' and carers' views, while preserving the anonymity of the responses to the questionnaire. Sixth-formers set a good example, including those who are educated for part of the time on different sites. In many lessons, students show a very business-like attitude and a desire to learn. They have a good sense of fair play and support for each other, whether students are learning, taking-on roles of responsibility, or competing in, for example, sports activities.

Exclusions have fallen steadily over recent years, helped by the college's high expectations of students' behaviour. Punctuality to the college and to lessons is good.

Most parents and carers say that the college keeps students safe. A very large majority of parents and carers agree that bullying is dealt with effectively. Students have a comprehensive knowledge of different types of bullying and are able to empathise with people who are affected by, for example, cyber, racist and homophobic bullying. Good systems to care and support students and a programme of learning throughout the school which gives them a good understanding of potential dangers for their age add to their sense of security.

### **Leadership and management**

The senior team and middle leaders, led determinedly by the ambitious Principal, form a committed and cohesive team. Responsibilities are clearly defined. Leaders at all levels are striving to bring about more consistency in practices through monitoring and evaluation, although this does not always result in common priorities throughout the school. Some judgements are not always accurate, with some over-generous judgements having been made about the impact of school practices, including those made about the quality of teaching. However, during the inspection, the senior team's judgements about lessons observed matched the inspectors' accurately. There is not regular enough re-visiting of leaders' initiatives to assess their continuing effectiveness. The improvement plan identifies the college's main areas for improvement, supported by a training programme and performance management objectives which work satisfactorily towards the college's goals. The decline in mathematics standards is being tackled rigorously and strategies, such as an increase in lessons and specialist staff, are accelerating progress. The college is not yet sharing, as a matter of course, the good and outstanding teaching practices amongst staff to accelerate students' progress, particularly in mathematics.

Satisfactory equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination are evident in the achievement of all groups of students, including the sixth form. The college monitors the good participation rates of all groups of students in the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

Recent improvements to the curriculum are providing a more solid foundation for improving standards in the college and sixth form. The reduction to three 'pathways' in Key Stage 4, and the greater emphasis on academic subjects have resulted in courses which fit students' needs and aspirations better and provide a better balance of skills and knowledge. This is also the case in the sixth form, which more students join and stay on for Year 13 than previously. Most students go on to further education, employment, and training. Fundamental to the college's goals is the development of students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural understanding, which is good overall. Opportunities to further their cultural development are less structured than others.

The governing body acts as a supportive and challenging group, which is developing further its knowledge of the college's performance. It ensures that the academy meets safeguarding arrangements. This includes the care of students who may be vulnerable.

A strength of the college is its range of partnerships, particularly with other schools, which provide broader provision, especially in the sixth form. Specialist science status has created opportunities not otherwise available, such as placements for students seeking particular careers. The college has a good relationship with parents and carers and their involvement as partners in their children's education, such as in target-setting, continues to develop. The responses to the inspection questionnaires show that the very large majority of parents and carers feel well informed.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



16 March 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Minsthorpe Community College, A Specialist Science College, South Elmsall, WF9 2UJ**

On behalf of the inspection team, I thank you for your cooperation and courtesy throughout the two days that we spent with you recently. In particular, we enjoyed hearing your views about your college and the education that you receive. Your thoughts were valued by us and have been taken into account in the judgements that we have made.

We have judged that your behaviour is good. Your attendance is high. Together they demonstrate your positive attitudes to college and learning.

Your college gives you a satisfactory education, including in the sixth form. This is evident in your satisfactory progress and average standards by the end of Year 11. Students in Year 12 and 13 also make satisfactory progress. You make good progress in English because teaching is stronger than in other subjects and often good or better. Most teaching, however, is satisfactory.

The college is keen to improve. I have asked the Principal to help you to make quicker progress by making sure that the work you are given is at the right level and that your work tells you what you have achieved and the next steps you need to take. I also want you to have enough time in each lesson to practise what you have learnt, which is not always the case currently. The staff will also help the college to improve by checking its performance very carefully and regularly, so that they can put into place quickly any actions that are necessary to help you. I hope that you will help the college to make these improvements by, for example, making sure that you respond to the advice teachers give you when they mark your work.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock  
Lead Inspector

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