

Whitby Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121667
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	359060
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Bowles 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	14–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	829
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Simpson
Headteacher	Mr Keith Prytherch
Date of previous school inspection	9 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Heavy snow, which halted transport, meant that there were few students in the college on the first day of the inspection. Conditions were more normal on the second day and inspectors observed a total of 28 lessons involving 27 teachers. Meetings were held with small groups of parents and carers and members of the governing body and with groups of students and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation about safeguarding and other policies, improvement planning, data about students' progress and information for parents and carers. Fifty two parental questionnaires were read as well as 137 from students and 38 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well different groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn and make progress.
- To what extent teachers and others act on high expectations for students.
- How effectively leaders at all levels plan and drive improvement and evaluate impact.

Information about the school

Whitby Community College takes students principally from two middle-deemed-secondary schools. The three schools have formed a confederation which serves the town of Whitby and local villages. Numbers on roll in the sixth form have risen since the previous inspection. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is broadly average. While the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. The college is resourced for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties and is part of an extended schools cluster. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. There are very few looked after children. The college has recently moved to a position of using science with mathematics as its specialist subject areas. It is helping to improve provision in the town through the North Yorkshire Coast Area Learning Partnership. The college has achieved Investors in People status and the Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools Awards. At the last inspection in April 2008, the college was judged to be satisfactory, having previously been in a category of concern for three years. Areas for development identified in 2008 included the following.

- Raise achievement and standards.
- Improve teaching and learning so that there is greater expectation and challenge in all lessons.
- Ensure that specialist status has a much greater impact across the college to the benefit of all students.

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

1

Main findings

Whitby Community College has improved tremendously over the past four years and is now good. After a prolonged period of underperformance, the college was judged satisfactory in April 2008. Since then, improvement has continued at an impressive rate and outcomes are now good overall. This is due to exceptionally clear and decisive leadership from the headteacher, fully supported by an increasingly effective senior and middle leadership team. They have set exacting targets and pursued a systematic programme to raise standards throughout the college. Determined yet supportive management for staff, with very well targeted professional development, have thoroughly embedded high expectations. As a result the quality of teaching has crossed a grade boundary and students' attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance and preparation for successful adult life have all substantially improved. Changes in provision have significantly improved equality of opportunity and have fundamentally transformed attitudes. This track record demonstrates an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Students now make good progress in the great majority of lessons because teaching is good overall. They are attentive and cooperative. In the best lessons they are intensely involved in their learning but, in a small minority, teachers miss opportunities to engage them fully. Students take full advantage of a wide range of courses and learning pathways which are carefully designed to help them to move on to employment and higher education. The foundation learning programme, BTEC courses, young apprenticeships and other work-related learning mean that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities now achieve as well as others. Students acquire basic skills in numeracy and literacy very well and, by applying their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a range of subjects, they are well-prepared for the future.

The care, support and guidance provided for students are good. Particularly effective monitoring and support helps students to catch up if they fall behind. Some students described the exceptional lengths to which the college has gone to ensure their success: providing one-to-one support and relentlessly working in their best interests. They feel valued: in the words of one sixth-form student, 'When everyone is nagging you to do well, you don't want to let them down.'

Students behave considerately towards each other and respectfully to the staff. They show high levels of trust in the college and an exceptionally strong sense of safety. They respond well to the programmes to support their health and well-being and effectively support each other and the local community by taking on a wide range of leadership roles.

There is a clear long-term vision for the college's sustained and consistent improvement, and decisions have been taken with this, rather than short-term gains, in mind. The college has promoted equality well and the achievement of all significant groups is now

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consistent. Parents and carers are well informed about their children's progress and are involved in key decisions about the college. The college has worked successfully to support the wider community of the town and surrounding area, and is taking steps to ensure that students have a greater awareness of a wider range of religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds than those represented locally. The college provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment so that it is consistently above average by developing students' understanding of their own learning and progress so that they are better equipped to learn independently.
- Improve the use of teaching strategies and structures which enable greater participation by all students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Outcomes have improved greatly and are now good, as a result of greatly enhanced provision. The college has developed a much more positive climate for learning, which makes students feel valued and motivated. Students' outstanding sense of safety exemplifies this. Students know how to stay safe because much relevant learning about managing a wide range of risks is effectively embedded in the curriculum; and they feel exceptionally safe because of the mutually supportive ethos of the college. Attendance has risen well, met targets and is now above the average for students in the same age range nationally. There are few students who do not go on to employment, education or training post 16 or post 18. Most students arrive in lessons punctually and prepared to learn. Most behave sensibly, even when not supervised, and they cooperate well with staff and with each other.

In a large majority of lessons observed, all groups of students were learning well and clearly acquiring skills and knowledge. Students try hard and collaborate well in group work. Inconsistencies in the quality of learning are being tackled very effectively and, as a result, students' overall progress and attainment have improved considerably. Students currently make good progress from their broadly-average prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Students' attainment by the age of 16 is average and has risen. In some respects it is higher; for example, more students than average attain five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics. Functional literacy and numeracy are above average. However, some variation has prevented overall attainment being consistently above average in the recent past. In the past, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make enough progress, but the college has closed that gap by making its curriculum and teaching more inclusive. Now the quality of learning and the progress of these students, including those with behavioural difficulties, are broadly in line with those of their peers. The current focus on raising the aspirations of gifted and talented students is improving the quality of their work. The school's data on current attainment are based on a rigorous system with proven accuracy, and indicate that the school should exceed its challenging targets in 2011.

Students respond well to the college's very effective programme of assemblies, lessons and other activities to promote their health, well-being and personal development. A good number of students make a positive contribution to the college and local community

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through charitable activities, coaching and peer mentoring. Visits and visitors broaden their understanding of culture and modern society. They reflect thoughtfully on matters of spiritual or emotional well-being and talk with interest and reason about questions of morality and social difference. Their views, gathered through regular surveys and the work of the broad-based Student Leadership Group, have a strong influence on key decisions in the college. Students respond enthusiastically to the numerous opportunities offered to develop their talents, take up new interests or become more physically active.

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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved very well and is now good overall. Some is outstanding. Teachers now set high expectations and many use their good subject knowledge to devise interesting activities which help students learn. Teachers in the main use assessment effectively to plan for the different needs of students, to involve them in understanding what counts as good and excellent work and to give them helpful feedback. A good number question particularly well, making sure everyone in the class is thinking and probing students' responses to draw out understanding or add extra challenge. Relationships are positive. However, teaching does not in every case secure good progress. This is usually because teachers do not make full use of strategies which enable students to participate fully in learning. These lessons are too teacher-directed, missing opportunities to engage students fully in thinking for themselves and to equip them well

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for independent learning. Sometimes teachers do not check carefully enough how far all students have met their objectives, nor provide sufficient constructive marking.

The curriculum has a clearly positive effect on outcomes. All students receive a balanced education in Key Stage 4, with particularly good provision for the acquisition of functional numeracy and literacy skills. An innovative foundation curriculum, with planned progression beyond the age of 16, well supports those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities including emotional and behavioural difficulties. Effective coordination allows for a high degree of personalisation, so that, for example, students are able to participate in the impressive range of work-related learning without missing English, mathematics or science lessons. Given the size of the school, a wide range of pathways is available, which includes the Diploma in Society Health and Development and a skills-based outdoor education course. Extensive thought and effective work with partners has ensured that students, whatever their prior attainment or individual needs, can progress to suitable courses when they are aged 16 and beyond. The recent move to science with mathematics as the college's specialism is helping to develop courses offering more students better prospects for progression to higher education or employment. Collaboration with the partner middle schools effectively supports transition, guidance on subject and pathway choices and in science, for example, GCSE courses beginning in the middle school. Tutorial time is well used to foster good personal development. Although most students do not achieve a qualification in ICT, the habits and skills needed for their economic well-being are well developed for all groups. There is a wide range of enrichment activities related to the arts, fitness and languages. Activities are increasingly personalised, including for gifted and talented students. Through its monitoring, the college can demonstrate some impact, for example, on raising the participation of girls in out-of-hours sport or physical education.

Good care, support and guidance complement the inclusive curriculum. As a result most students with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other individual needs learn with enthusiasm and interest and acquire skills and knowledge in line with other students. Case studies illustrate how the college goes out of its way to support students with behavioural difficulties or who are at risk so that they make the most of opportunities and obtain qualifications. Absences, exclusions and unacceptable behaviour have declined strikingly as a result of consistent use of policies. Any discrimination or bullying behaviour, students say, is quickly sorted out, sometimes with their help as anti-bullying mentors. Sensible arrangements for transition ensure students settle well. They mix well and newcomers feel welcomed. Academic, vocational and lifestyle guidance works well so that students are well informed about opportunities available to them and have appropriate aspirations for their future and their good health.

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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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

College staff and the governing body share an impressive understanding of the direction set for the college and their part in it. This is because leaders and managers involve them in very searching self-evaluation and link this very clearly to plans for improvement at all levels. Professional development is perfectly aligned with priorities. Monitoring is accurate, rigorous and very consistently followed up by sustained coaching. Leaders work very flexibly to ensure all areas of the college's work are well managed. This has significantly improved the quality of teaching. Leaders identify remaining weaknesses with unflinching accuracy and tackle them effectively. The senior team sets high expectations and leads by example. All indications are that staff morale has improved dramatically over the past two years. Changes to provision in both key stages are taken in the long-term interest of all groups of students and are carefully evaluated. This has ensured that all groups now achieve equally well. Equally robust steps have ensured that discrimination and other forms of unacceptable behaviour are not tolerated. Clear procedures to safeguard students are applied and checked with rigour. Systems for guiding academic progress are much more focused and effective. Taken together, these changes have had a very positive impact on the culture of the college and on the much improved outcomes for students. The views of parents and carers, students and staff, which are regularly sought, are now firmly positive.

Strategic leadership by senior staff and the governing body shows great foresight and relentless determination to create better outcomes for all in the local community. Very productive partnership with other providers has significantly contributed to improved outcomes. This includes close work with the two middle schools, with which the college is developing the same specialist subjects. The three schools train together regularly and collaborate to plan common schemes for mathematics, science and English in Year 9, as well as to guide students' course choices. The college also manages shared local provision for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Improved collaboration with parents and carers has, as some commented, helped close the gaps in achievement. The college's promotion of community cohesion is good. As a result of their wider learning opportunities, students appreciate their opportunities and their responsibilities beyond the school and the immediate locality. Good analysis of the local context has informed programmes of learning, so that students are increasingly involved in visits, debates and exchanges which expand their awareness of the cultures, faiths and ethnicity beyond their day-to-day experience.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	2
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

The continuously evolving curriculum offered in the sixth form has the breadth and depth needed to enable a wide range of students to progress in their chosen direction. Because provision is well managed, students in the sixth form achieve good all-round outcomes. Good progress was evident in the majority of observed lessons, and students' attitudes are mostly very positive. Variations between subjects have been significantly reduced and benchmarking shows a good number perform very well. Results for 2010 indicate a striking improvement on previous years in less-well-performing subjects, because of well-targeted actions to boost attainment. Individual monitoring and interventions are keeping more students on track for challenging targets. Independent study is well supported through the learning centre. This has a full-time manager, an accessible ICT technician, generous provision, including lap-tops which can be borrowed for home use, and a highly effective mentoring programme. Attendance has risen and more students are joining the sixth form and staying for longer. From broadly-average starting points, students now reach above-average attainment. Students appreciate the firm and persistent support and guidance they experience. They feel their views are listened to, that the college takes decisions in their best interests and teaching has become more consistently effective. They also feel valued and well cared for personally. They respond by playing a positive part in the life of the school as mentors and role models. Many get involved in exchanges and take up opportunities to assist local primary schools with reading, sport or swimming.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
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

A large majority of the parents and carers who gave their views agreed or strongly agreed with each statement in the questionnaire. Nearly all felt the college keeps students safe. A number took the opportunity to write about how the college had improved and how it has helped their children to settle and make progress. Some wrote about the humane and helpful response to individual needs and when difficulties arise. There were also some individual negative comments about behaviour, teaching or communications which were brought to the attention of senior staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitby Community College 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 829 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	37	26	50	5	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	37	29	56	2	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	38	27	52	4	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	21	36	69	4	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	25	31	60	6	12	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	21	34	65	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	17	37	71	3	6	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)	9	17	36	69	6	12	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	21	34	65	6	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	17	34	65	7	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	19	32	62	6	12	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	21	40	23	44	2	4	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	35	28	54	4	8	1	2

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



10 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Whitby Community College, Whitby, YO21 1LA

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent inspection of the college. It was a great pleasure to meet so many of you and gather your views. I write now to let you know the main findings of the inspection.

- Outcomes for students are good overall. Attendance and behaviour have improved well, and students have an outstandingly strong sense of safety.
- Students now achieve well. Attainment is in line with the national average, and slightly above average in the sixth form. The quality of learning is good.
- The broad and imaginative curriculum helps students gain the skills they need and make their way towards qualifications and work.
- The good care, support and guidance provided make a significant difference to students' progress and well-being.
- Teaching is good. A large majority of teaching challenges all students well, although sometimes students could be more fully involved.
- Leaders and managers are doing a fine job. They have very successfully embedded higher expectations for the quality of education so that it is now good in all respects.

The headteacher and the governing body have a clear view of how to improve the college even further. They have agreed with me that these are main priorities to achieve this.

- Raise attainment so that it is consistently above average by developing students' understanding of their own learning and progress so that they are better equipped to learn independently.
- Improve the use of teaching strategies and structures which enable greater participation by all students.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Ms Susan Bowles

Her Majesty's Inspector

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