

Ringmer Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114593
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	357580
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Robert Ellis

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	757
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Fordham
Headteacher	Kathryn Stonier
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
School address	Lewes Road Lewes BN8 5RB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 33 lessons and 32 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with staff who have particular responsibilities, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, the governing body minutes, curriculum plans, the school's tracking data showing pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, pupils' work and the displays around the school. In addition, the Ofsted questionnaire responses of 93 parents and carers, 98 pupils and 27 staff were analysed and their views taken into account.

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

- The school's self-evaluation at all levels, with a sharp focus on the achievement of different groups of students.
- How effectively teachers use assessment information to accelerate students' progress, particularly in Key Stage 3
- The use of monitoring information to assess the impact of initiatives

Information about the school

Ringmer is an average-sized school, serving a wide catchment area. It became an 11-19 school in September 2008 and it is a specialist school for technology and applied learning. Most students are of White British heritage and very few speak a language other than English as their first language. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is around half the national average. The college has specialist provision for students who have significant communication and learning difficulties. Consequently, although the number of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the number of students who have a statement of special educational needs is high. The college has gained the Artsmark Gold, International Schools award and it is recognised for its work on sustainability.

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

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection and some aspects of the school's work are now outstanding. The school meets the needs of its students well and leaders and managers demonstrate good capacity for further improvement.

- The school is led well and members of the governing body provide a good balance of challenge and support.
- Those responsible for leading and managing the school have a clear and accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development.
- Standards are rising and effective systems and procedures are in place to track students' progress and provide support for those who are falling behind or who need extra help.
- The quality of teaching is good and it is improving because appropriate challenge and support are provided for teachers.
- Students feel extremely safe and the school's arrangements to care for them and ensure their safety are good.
- Behaviour is good and attendance is average and improving.
- The school knows its community very well and makes an excellent contribution to promoting community cohesion.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a broad range of good experiences that make a strong contribution to students' learning. However, the Key Stage 3 curriculum is less well developed and it does not offer the same richness of opportunity.
- The school's specialisms are having a positive impact on the curriculum and developments in the sixth form.
- Teachers' planning and work in lessons does not always take full account of the precise needs of different groups of students. Teachers' marking of students' work does not consistently provide helpful guidance on how the work can be improved or developed.
- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are improving and most make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. However, despite rapid development, the sixth form is not yet as effective and efficient as it can be.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the use of assessment to ensure that tasks and activities are matched consistently to the needs and interests of the different groups of students, and improve the quality of marking.
- Improve the Key Stage 3 curriculum so that it provides appropriate challenge and exciting opportunities for independent learning that motivate students to do well.
- Build on improvements to the sixth form so that it is effective and efficient in meeting the needs and aspirations of all students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most students enjoy learning and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Standards are rising and the proportion of pupils who achieve five GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics is close to the national average. The school's tracking data and inspectors' observations of students' work in lessons show that a rapidly increasing proportion of students are on track to achieve or exceed challenging targets. Students who have additional needs are well supported and they also make good progress.

Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is generally good. There has been a significant decline in the number of incidents involving inappropriate behaviour and a similar reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions. Students' attendance and punctuality have improved and the school has worked hard to successfully support and challenge students who have previously not attended as well as they might.

Students say that they feel very safe and that their views and opinions are valued. They have exceptional opportunities to contribute to their own and the wider community, and students take pride in their responsibilities, for example as eco representatives, serving on the school council and as peer mentors. Students understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. They are enabled to develop the skills and personal qualities that will be useful in the next steps in their education or employment.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and it is now good, with examples of outstanding practice. Appropriate assessment systems and procedures have been developed to accurately assess the levels at which students are working and provide them with realistic targets. However, assessment information is not used consistently well across all classes. Most teachers plan lessons to take account of students' different abilities and interests, but occasionally the needs of some groups of students are not met precisely enough to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

In the majority of lessons, teachers use a good range of strategies and resources to engage and challenge all learners. Although most teachers use effective questioning to gauge understanding and develop learning, in a few lessons, questions are not targeted sufficiently at the different abilities within the class and are pitched at one level. Students generally receive good oral feedback but marking in students' books provides insufficient guidance on how work can be improved or developed.

The curriculum is being developed so that it meets the needs of all students. Most improvement is evident at Key Stage 4 where detailed pathways ensure all students, regardless of their ability or starting points, can develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and make the progress of which they are capable. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is less well developed and the school recognises that this needs to be a priority for development. The positive impact of the school's specialisms can be seen in the

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personalised curriculum pathways, improved student self-esteem and the development and inclusive ethos of the sixth form.

Students are very well cared for. The well-organised vertical tutor groups provide well for students' personal and social development. There are good systems to identify and support vulnerable students and those needing additional support. The school can demonstrate many notable successes in improving behaviour, attendance and achievement for particular individuals and groups.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The school is led well. The senior leaders have an ambitious vision for the school and they have been successful in creating a cohesive community where all students are valued. Clear priorities for improvement are based on a rigorous analysis of accurate performance data. Self-evaluation is accurate and, consequently, senior leaders have a clear picture of strengths and areas for development, and can demonstrate the use of monitoring information to assess the impact of initiatives.

The governing body is well informed and provides the school with a good balance of challenge and support. Governors are increasingly involved in the strategic development of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well to make sure that staff and students are safeguarded effectively and kept healthy. Relationships with parents and carers are productive and the school makes regular contact with parents and carers. A range of good partnerships has been developed at local, national and international level and these make a positive contribution to students' learning. As part of these partnership arrangements, the school provides support for other schools in ecological and environmental education.

The promotion of equality and the elimination of discrimination is at the heart of the school's work and the school has had a significant impact on community cohesion both within the school and beyond. The impact of this work is seen in students' strong moral, social and cultural development and the extent to which students are proud of their school.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

The sixth form is very inclusive and the vast majority of students make satisfactory or better progress in relation to their starting points. Unvalidated data show that outcomes for sixth form students in 2010 are significantly higher than those achieved in the sixth form's first year. The school's tracking data and observation of sixth form lessons show that most current students are on track to achieve their challenging targets.

The sixth form curriculum is evolving and, as the number of students grows, a greater range of courses is being offered. A number of classes are very small and, although this provides a wider choice for students, it does limit the type of activities that can be undertaken in lessons. The school is planning to develop closer partnerships with other local schools to improve provision in the sixth form and ensure that the sixth form provides good value.

When the sixth form opened, an experienced member of the senior leadership team led it. Now that it is becoming established, a head of sixth form has recently been appointed and leadership and management of the sixth form is being transferred. Sixth form students speak very positively about their experiences in the sixth form and say how much they enjoy the respect that they are given and the good relationships evident between staff and students.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire indicate that they are very happy with their child's experience at the school and feel that their children enjoy school and are safe. A significant minority of parents and carers do not feel well informed about their child's progress and would like more advice about how they can support their child's learning. The school accepts and inspectors agree that more can be done to meet this particular need and it is exploring the most effective way to provide parents and carers with the precise information and support that they need.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ringmer 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 757 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	44	49	53	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	40	53	57	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	32	47	51	16	17	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	32	47	51	12	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	34	48	52	6	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	27	46	49	17	18	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	22	55	59	12	13	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)	34	37	41	44	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	39	45	48	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	31	49	53	5	5	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	27	48	52	9	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	43	39	42	9	10	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	45	44	47	6	6	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	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.



19 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ringmer Community College, Ringmer BN8 5RB

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with the inspection. I would particularly like to thank those of you who took time to meet with us to talk about your school or explained about the work you were doing in lessons.

Most of you told us that you enjoy learning and feel really safe and well cared for. We were pleased to see that many of you are now making good progress in lessons. We saw that you get on well together and that you are very involved in the school community and are prepared to take responsibility. The adults who are responsible for your school understand what needs to be done and have some good ideas about how to make the school an even better place for learning.

These are the key things that we would like the school to do:

- Make sure that the work and activities that teachers give you are always set at just the right level so you can all make good progress in all lessons and give you good advice on how you can improve your work.
- Improve how learning is organised at Key Stage 3 so that learning is more interesting and motivates you to do well.
- Develop the sixth form so that all sixth form students can follow appropriate courses and make good progress.

I am sure that all of you will want to play your part by working hard and helping to make the school even better.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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