

Sky College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123939
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	354238
Inspection date	20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paddy West
Headteacher	Trevor Averre-Beeson
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
School address	Pickerage Close Taunton TA2 7HW
Telephone number	01823 275569
Fax number	01823 275569
Email address	office@skycollege.somerset.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

Social care inspector

Age group	11-16
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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

When Sky College was last inspected in March 2009 it was called The Priory School and was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection the school was judged to be making good progress.

This inspection, the fourth monitoring inspection, was carried out with no notice by one of Her Majestys Inspectors, one additional inspector and one social care inspector. Inspectors visited 10 lessons taught by six teachers and three teaching assistants. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, other teachers, the chair of the governing body, partners working in the off-site provisions and students. They observed the schools work, including that at off-site provisions, and looked at a range of documentation including that regarding students progress, the quality of teaching, and boarding. They also made use of the questionnaires completed by those students who use the boarding provision.

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

The improvement since the last monitoring visit in the proportion of good teaching to accelerate students progress and raise attainment.

The capacity of leaders and managers to sustain the progress made in dealing with the areas for improvement identified in the March 2009 inspection.

The quality of the boarding provision and the impact its provision has on learning.

Information about the school

The school is the only provision in the local authority for students who have a statement of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Consequently, most students travel to school by taxi or bus, some travelling long distances. The school runs a daily breakfast club. There were 12 boarders at the time of the inspection. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. A few are in public care.

Since the March 2009 inspection there have been considerable significant changes in staffing and in the way that the school is organised. A key example is that, starting in January 2010, the local authority contracted the company Lilac Sky to oversee the leadership and management of the school for a period of five years. The current executive headteacher is the director of education of Lilac Sky Schools. The Lilac Sky management team has also been supplemented by a director of learning, on attachment from the neighbouring Chilton School. The school now has three distinctive learning communities roughly of similar size: Mendip, Quantock and Blackdown. Students of the Blackdown community have all their learning conducted off-site.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. When the school was placed in special measures the key areas for improvement were to:

complete the single central staff record fully in order to comply with current safeguarding requirements

establish and implement consistent strategies for managing students behaviour

assess students achievements regularly and accurately and use this information when planning learning activities

analyse data about students academic progress and their personal development in order that appropriate individual support and guidance measures can be put into place.

There has been good progress in all these areas. Overall, all but four inspection judgements have crossed a grade boundary upwards since the last inspection. The school provides a satisfactory education. The quality of the boarding at Sky College remains good. The school has taken appropriate action to address five of the seven social care recommendations contained in the previous inspection report. The two remaining are that the plans for refurbishment have not yet been implemented and there continues to be a very limited choice of evening meal. During the inspection, it was also noted that the storage available for controlled medication was not appropriately lockable and that not all locks fitted on bathroom doors were able to be overridden.

Leaders have been highly successful in creating a learning culture inside the school and improving its relationship with local residents. Given their starting points, students achievement is satisfactory. However, resulting from the legacy of underachievement, standards remain low. Senior and middle leaders have set challenging targets for the students; staff now have the capacity to help the students attain them.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly. This is a result of the combination of new appointments, coaching, intensive support, professional development, training and visits to other highly successful schools. While most teaching observed was good, there remain areas of relative weakness. Sometimes teachers expectations of students are not consistently high enough and on these occasions the work provided is too easy. Students now know their individual learning targets as well as their behavioural ones. In a few classrooms the displays do not help students to learn. Here, students progress towards challenging targets is less obvious and in these rooms the use of assessment information is not consistently used or referenced enough in lessons.

Improved behaviour, together with displays and use of walls to aid learning, for example through learning ladders, targets and curriculum levels, contributes to the improved

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learning and satisfactory progress that students make. Nevertheless, the refurbishment cannot compensate for the overall poor quality of some of the buildings. Consequently, while the curriculum is good there is an unequal access to high quality provision for those students who learn on the school site compared with some of those in the Blackdown community. The school and local authority are fully aware of this and a new building and more extensive refurbishment programme is due to start in the summer. This should help to resolve the issue and provide the much needed improvements to the boarding accommodation.

Given the recent history of changes in staffing and the fixed-term basis of the senior leadership, inspectors carefully investigated the strength of the middle leadership and management teams and the succession planning. Senior and middle leaders showed they know the schools strengths and areas for further development and have successfully instigated plans to drive improvement. Other team leaders are now having a significantly positive impact on provision, even though some have only been in post for a short time. The record of substantial recovery provides strong evidence that the schools capacity for further improvement is secure. Although Lilac Sky is beginning to plan its exit strategy with the governing body, the appointment of a substantive headteacher and deputy has not started. Therefore, the schools capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good and better teaching by ensuring that:
 - in all lessons teachers expectations of students are high enough
 - all classrooms provide the same high quality learning environment.
 - Ensure that all students have equal opportunities to access high quality provision.
 - Ensure that the new leaders, and those due to be appointed, effectively develop their roles and continue to improve the quality of education provided by the school and the recognised qualifications that students attain.
 - The school must ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standards for boarding which have not been met.
 - Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Last year, for the first time in the history of the school, all students were entered for GCSEs in English, mathematics and science. Of these students the majority attained a grade in at least one subject. Although this is not good enough, it represents a cultural shift and satisfactory students achievement. Other changes that have that have led to improvements so that the majority of students make at least satisfactory and often good progress are:

the change in school name; reflecting ambition and a fresh start

the proud wearing of a uniform, including a shirt and blazer, with optional tie

all students having the education to which they are entitled

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the significant reduction in the use of physical restraints

the significant reduction in the amount of the need and use of exclusions.

During the inspection, good learning was observed in most of the lessons and activities seen. In food technology lessons, students continue to learn about healthy meals and use knives and equipment safely. In physical education lessons, students get good quality exercise and learn individual skills that enable them to effectively take part in team games and competitive activities. The school is aware that some students need extra help with smoking cessation. Some members of the Blackdown community are being helped to do this through work with experienced fitness trainer partners in a state of the art gym. Students contributions to the wider community have not been a priority in recent years, although much successful work has been done by the school to encourage local residents to visit the school.

Nearly all students in Key Stage 4 are developing skills and understanding to prepare them for their future lives through good quality work placements. In one case this is leading towards an apprenticeship. There has been good work to improve attendance and students have responded positively to the schools improved curriculum and enjoy their learning more. However, a few students are persistently absent. The school and local authority are working very effectively to resolve this legacy. Students have an increased understanding of right and wrong and, as a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ 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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How effective is the provision?

Teaching, and consequently learning, has significantly improved as a result of coaching activities and training. Staff now have access to thorough assessment information and most use this well to make sure the needs of all students are met. Planning is now consistent and marking helps students see where they could improve and what to learn next. An excellent example was seen in literacy. Here planning ensures that students develop literacy skills through a wide range of different contexts, activities and seating positions. Learning seen was meaningful, conducted at a swift pace and the activities encouraged independence and team work with relevance to the world beyond school.

The curriculum is now designed to meet the individual students needs much better. The three separate learning communities have tailored programmes to match their capabilities and interests. During the inspection, students were enjoying far more meaningful practical activities and links between subjects were more evident; for example, students were investigating sedimentation in science, designing and making individual pasta dishes using a roux sauce in food technology, and using view finders to help compare and contrast their drawings with those of significant surrealist artists.

As well as preparing for traditional GCSE qualifications, students also develop portfolios of evidence for a Certificate of Personal Effectiveness. This helps to promote and develop a wide range of personal qualities, abilities and achievements, as well as introducing students to new activities and challenges. The use of information and communication technology to accelerate learning and enhance enjoyment has greatly increased in this and all areas of the curriculum. Again this is due to training and coaching of staff but also reflects the extensive investment in high quality up-to-date equipment such as laptops and interactive whiteboards that has taken place over the last year.

Those students with the most complex needs, or who are most vulnerable because of their circumstances, are extremely well cared for, guided and supported. This results from a high degree of individual tuition from support assistants and off-site partners who work regularly with the students and know them well. It is also due to the high quality work of the pastoral support team and the schools close working with their partners and other agencies. With the high calibre of recent appointments, therapy work can now be offered at the appropriate time to students when needed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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

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How effective are leadership and management?

Crucial to the improvement of the school have been the impact of the drive and ambition from the Lilac Sky team and, over the last year, the additional highly effective appointments to the senior and middle leadership. There has been a rigorous and intensive programme of monitoring, evaluation, coaching, mentoring, training and financial investment into the fabric and infrastructure of the school. At the heart of the ensuing success has been the willingness of school staff and students to try new ways of looking at and doing things; having a fresh start. The school community has rallied successfully to create an atmosphere in which staff, students (and their families) know they matter and are fully included in its life and work. Students are encouraged to respect people who are different to themselves. The changes to the curriculum have had a good impact on tackling discrimination. However, the Blackdown community students currently have better access to more modern and exciting facilities, which is why the schools promotion of equality of opportunity is not better than satisfactory.

Robust up-to-date tracking and assessment monitoring systems help all staff have an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development. The governing body too has a much clearer understanding of the work of the school. This, and the restructuring in the school, has allowed the governing body to challenge the school about its work and to be in a better position to support future developments.

The schools processes and procedures for ensuring safety and risk management are now proactive rather than reactionary, and their impact is good. The school is now a safe and calm place in which to work and learn. One reason for students accelerated progress is that they are well cared for in a much enhanced and supportive learning environment. Regular meetings with partners and agencies have helped the school secure significant improvements for the lives and future life chances of students and their families. Through its work in partnership with the local community the school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

There is a commitment in the boarding provision to drive forward improvement. The head of care has now obtained NVQ level four in care management. Care staff now have a formal personal development plan, written monitoring reports are comprehensive and there are regular forums in place where young people can be consulted.

The health care needs of the young people are fully assessed and met when they are boarding at the school. Clear procedures are followed for the management and administration of medication, and appropriate records are kept. Controlled medication is not currently stored securely enough to meet current guidelines. There is always a first aid qualified member of staff available on site.

Effective behaviour management strategies are in place. This means that the need for physical interventions and the need for sanctions are now very rare. Staff are proactive in resolving situations and maintaining high levels of individual care. Young people clearly understand the expectations and their responsibilities when boarding at the school. Young people report that they always feel safe when boarding and that bullying is not an issue, as it is not tolerated in the school. There are robust safeguarding procedures that staff are familiar with and would feel confident to use if necessary.

Young people's safety when boarding at the school is promoted by the use of risk assessments which identify potential individual risks and the action that staff need to take to manage them. Records show regular fire drills and equipment checks are carried out and young people are clear about the action that they should take in the event of a fire. Robust procedures ensure that only suitable persons are employed. Enhanced criminal records bureau checks have been obtained for each staff member and the standards for safe recruitment are fully met.

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Achievable targets are set for each young person and these are regularly reviewed in line with individual needs. Targets are personalised to ensure that young people take small steps to success at their own pace. This is a successful method of supporting the young people to develop new skills. Education is actively promoted and there is effective continuity and communication between the school and boarding staff.

Cultural, religious and racial needs are identified and addressed and young people are encouraged to respect and value difference.

Young people are fully involved in the day-to-day running of the boarding provision and they have the opportunity to contribute to the choice of outings, activities and menus. Young people are encouraged by staff to get involved in a range of leisure activities indoors and out in the community. There are regular trips out and support given to use local leisure facilities and youth groups. The young people have enjoyed an annual holiday to an activity centre.

Young people are very well supported by a competent and committed head of care and staff team. Young people are happy with their care and do not think that there is anything that the staff could do better. It was observed that staff are calm, relaxed and patient in the way that they interact with the young people, so that the young people are comfortable and secure in their relationships with the staff. Young people report that they enjoy using the boarding provision and are well looked after by the staff, who they like and respect. One young person said, 'I wish I could live here all of the time.'

The accommodation is clean and comfortable. Young people can personalise their bedrooms. However, the buildings and facilities are dated and there are plans in place to refurbish and upgrade the accommodation.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- Ensure that all locks fitted on bathroom doors are able to be overridden (NMS 26)
- ensure that greater food choices are available at evening mealtimes (NMS 15)
- ensure that there is appropriate lockable storage available for controlled medication (NMS 14)
- ensure that the refurbishment and upgrade of the boarding provision takes place (NMS 23).

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does it.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

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">■ 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.



21 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sky College, Taunton TA2 7HW

I am writing to thank you for the support you gave me and my colleagues when we visited your school recently and on my previous visits over the last two years. We really appreciated the help you gave us, especially in sharing your work and your ideas about the school and boarding.

We judged that your school has significantly improved so that it no longer needs special measures. It is a satisfactory school overall. The boarding provision is good. Behaviour has improved and most of you attend lessons ready to work. You are making more of an effort to do your best in all your lessons and activities. The subjects and activities that you do are more exciting now and are helping you understand more about the world and what it has to offer you as well as making learning more fun. To help you more I have asked the staff to make sure that you are always reminded about your learning targets in all lessons and that these are at the right level. You can help them do this by telling adults when the work is too easy for you.

There have been many changes to your school. Some of you have told me that lilac is not your favourite choice of colour but, the significant changes that the Lilac Sky team, along with your efforts and the willingness and hard work of other staff, have made your school a much better school. To continue in this fresh start I have asked the school to ensure that new staff are helped to make sure that your school continues to improve so that you have the very best education possible, and do as well as you can. You can really help them by continuing to enjoy your learning even more and do your best at all times.

Thank you for being so polite and helpful during the visit. If you want to see the full report please go to our website which is at this link: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

With our very best wishes for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny

Her Majestys Inspector

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