

Sir John Thursby Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134996
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	360670
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Sally Kenyon 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	956
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Tranmer
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Dawson
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons, taught by 35 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with a representative of the governing body, senior school staff, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work in lessons across a wide range of subjects and in different year groups. Inspectors looked in detail at documents relating to the school's monitoring of its performance and undertook a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress. They also scrutinised minutes of meetings, improvement plans and safeguarding procedures. The responses from parents and carers on 124 questionnaires were considered, together with replies from staff and students.

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

- The attainment of students currently at the school.
- How well teaching and oral and written feedback secure good progress.
- The progress made by different groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of leadership and management at all levels across the school.

Information about the school

Sir John Thursby Community College is an average sized secondary school. It was formed five years ago from an amalgamation of two schools and moved into a new building in 2009. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is over five times the national average and the percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is over three times the national average. The college has the Leading Parent Partnership Award (2009), the Basic Skills Quality Award (2010), Investors in People Award (2011), Healthy School status (2007) and a Local Authority Excellence Award for Personalised Learning (2009).

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

Sir John Thursby Community College is a good school. Many features of the school's work are outstanding. One member of staff aptly commented, 'This is a school where every single child matters.' Since the previous inspection, this school community has moved from temporary accommodation into a state-of-the-art building. Visitors cannot help but be inspired by the many and varied opportunities for learning.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average, which represents good progress from students' low starting points on entry into the school. This is due to the good teaching and outstanding care, guidance and support that students receive. The school sets ambitious targets and most of the time achieves them.

The majority of lessons seen were good with none inadequate but there remains some satisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, teachers' high-quality planning allows students to take control of their own learning and make good or better progress. However, not all lessons allow for independent learning. In lessons where teaching was less effective, learning was predominantly led by the teacher, allowing students little opportunity to demonstrate better than satisfactory progress.

The school offers a good curriculum and takes a very personalised approach to students' needs, resulting in high attendance. For the majority of students, English is an additional language and many have low levels of literacy on entry to the school. While the inspectors saw some good examples of literacy across the curriculum, it remains inconsistent and, therefore, the impact on students' progress is limited.

The individual care that students receive is outstanding. The school works in partnership with a multitude of agencies to provide the best support it can for many students who are experiencing difficulties and challenging circumstances. Through good and effective self-evaluation processes, leaders at all levels have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and good plans are firmly in place to tackle any areas that need improvement. For example, when the school first opened, leaders focused very much on establishing a positive ethos and a cohesive community. However, once these were established and for the past two years, they have focused with great success on improving the quality of teaching and students' progress.

Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Policies for many aspects of school life are of a very high quality and this is reflected in the practice. Improving students' attainment and progress, robust self-evaluation, combined with the strong and highly adaptable leadership team, highly committed staff, supportive parents and carers and a clearly focused school improvement plan, indicate that the school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- What does the school need to do to improve further?
 - Further raise attainment by developing a consistent approach across the curriculum to improving students' literacy skills.
 - Ensure that more teaching is good or better by creating more opportunities for independent learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspection evidence, including lesson observations, assessment information and the school's own evaluations of teaching, shows that the majority of students make good progress in lessons. This occurs when teachers allow them to learn independently, and have clearly focused objectives and engaging, challenging tasks. However, such good practice is not evident in all lessons.

There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of students. The majority, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their individual starting points. School data and inspection evidence show that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are on track to meet or exceed their targets.

Inspectors observed good or better behaviour in the very large majority lessons and around the school. There have been no permanent exclusions for the past four years, a clear indication of the inclusive ethos of the school. Instances of bullying are rare. Most students and almost all parents and carers responding to the questionnaire say that students feel safe in school because there are high levels of supervision at lunch and break times and they are confident that staff will help them if there is a problem.

Attendance is high because of the relentless drive of school staff working in partnership with families. 'Learning Leaders' take responsibility for issues, such as punctuality within lessons. The result of this is that the number of persistent absentees has reduced dramatically over the last three years and is now well below the national average. Almost all students leave school and progress onto further education, training or employment.

Students feel very empowered by their school council, which is quite formal and models the democratic process from the point of election to decision making. Many students make valuable contributions to the school and wider community. For example, sports leaders organise games of cricket and football at lunch-time. Students recently raised over £300 to sponsor an African girl.

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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	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	1
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 since the previous inspection because of a continual focus on developing assessment to support learning. The quality of oral and written feedback has significantly improved. All students have 'learning milestones' in their books giving them detailed feedback about the strengths of their work and areas for development. Students then use these milestones to measure their own progress and remind them of their targets.

The majority of teaching is now securing good progress and learning. The best lessons are characterised by lively, engaging, creative teaching which challenges students to push themselves to achieve high standards. In a highly effective Year 10 English lesson, students were asked to write about the impression they had gained of a city from a piece of writing they had analysed in pairs. All students were engrossed in their 'timed challenge,' knowing exactly what was expected of them and having been well supported in independently gathering the information they needed. This resulted in some very high-quality written work and outstanding behaviour. In satisfactory lessons, students behave more passively and are not always appropriately challenged to think for themselves or produce extended written responses.

Most students know their targets and have a good understanding of their next steps towards achieving them. Inspectors saw some good examples of students assessing their

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own and others' progress. For example, in a Year 10 performing arts lesson about melodrama, students reviewed their work in pairs to help them further develop their ideas.

The good curriculum has made a significant contribution to raising attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. Students begin their GCSE courses in the final term of Year 9. The strong guidance ensures that all students follow a personalised pathway. A member of the senior leadership team works part time at the local sixth form college thus enhancing the already strong partnerships with post-16 providers. Some good examples of cross-curricular numeracy and information and communication technology were seen. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and many students take part in them.

Students agree that the care, guidance and support they receive are a significant strength of the school. They feel that there are a number of adults they could turn to if they had a problem. They are very appreciative of the support they receive at transition points, such as joining from primary school or leaving to start college or enter the world of work. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are well supported and nurtured so that they can enjoy all aspects of school life. The school has many students with very different abilities and a wide variety of needs. It is testament to the dedication of the staff that students are treated as individuals in a very respectful and supportive atmosphere.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's ambitious and effective plan to unite staff and students from two distinctly different schools and move into a brand new building while significantly raising standards demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

The very large majority of staff are proud to be part of the school and feel valued because their views are taken into account when the school sets its strategic goals and improvement plans. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Some staff take the role of teaching and learning ambassadors, sharing particular areas of expertise with others through a well-established coaching model. Staff report that this has had a very positive impact on the overall quality of teaching.

The school has a very well-focused strategic plan for community cohesion and its effectiveness can be seen throughout the school, which functions as a harmonious community. One parent commented: 'My children have grown in confidence since starting at the school. It has a good multicultural ethos.'

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The school's reputation in the local community has improved dramatically and so the school has full rolls for next year. The school has useful partnerships with schools in contrasting local authorities from which the students benefit, for example, by gaining a new perspective on different faiths. The impact of the school's work with its many partners makes an outstanding contribution to learning and well-being. A combination of shrewd strategic planning and experienced staff ensure that the school makes the most of the support and opportunities available. Local primary schools use the learning and resource areas for some of their lessons during the day, while parents and carers come for after-school classes in the evening.

The governing body was restructured in summer 2009 due to the imposition of National Challenge status, even though the school exceeded the National Challenge benchmarks within a matter of months. While the leadership of the governing body remains the same, some members are new and not as experienced. Individual members of the governing body are linked to and work with departments in school. They are also involved in meeting parents and carers and students regarding attendance, health and well-being. They hold highly effective pre-exclusion meetings' to consult with students at risk of exclusion and their parents and carers. However, systems for gathering the views of parents and carers and for becoming fully and systematically involved in school self-evaluation are yet to be embedded.

The school is highly successful in tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. There are very few racist incidents and these are thoroughly investigated. School leaders closely monitor the outcomes of different groups of students in the school to ensure that all do equally well. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. There are very detailed policies in place with clear and regular systems for monitoring, evaluation and review. Staff receive annual training on aspects of safeguarding, such as child protection and they also provide training for other schools.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers feel that the school is led and managed effectively. A few comments were received about behaviour and the way the school handles discipline. However, the large majority of parents and carers feel that behaviour is dealt with effectively. The inspection team followed up the concerns about behaviour with the school. Inspectors scrutinised behaviour records, held discussions with staff and students, and observed students' behaviour in classrooms and around the school. The inspectors concluded that, while there were some incidents of poor behaviour, swift and decisive action was taken to deal with them. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not help them to support their child's learning. The school is developing its work in this area and a group of 10 parents and carers have just completed an award in supporting their child's learning. A very small minority of parents and carers also felt that the school did not take account of their concerns. The inspection team followed up these concerns with the school and, while the large majority of parents and carers feel that their concerns are dealt with effectively, the school is already refining its home-school communication systems.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir John Thursby 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 124 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 956 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	24	79	64	12	10	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	44	35	74	60	4	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	32	71	57	10	8	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	31	69	56	11	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	33	68	55	9	7	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	28	66	53	13	10	5	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	23	72	58	16	13	5	4
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)	37	30	73	59	8	6	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	27	70	56	15	12	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	27	62	50	15	12	11	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	19	71	57	18	15	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	40	32	64	52	8	6	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	34	63	51	14	11	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir John Thursby Community College, Burnley, BB10 2AT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Many of you gave up your time to speak to us and to complete questionnaires. We found what you said interesting and thought-provoking and your comments helped us arrive at our judgements. We were particularly impressed with the friendly and caring atmosphere in the school and your good behaviour. We recognised that you play a very important part in making Sir John Thursby Community College a friendly, safe and inclusive place to learn.

- You achieve good outcomes, make good progress and attain average results in your examinations at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The outstanding care system supports all of you and is particularly effective in helping those of you who experience difficulties from time to time.
- Teaching is good and is helping you learn successfully.
- You are very caring, make a positive contribution to your school and local community, and like to help other people by raising money.

We have asked the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning by creating more opportunities for you to learn independently. This will help everyone to make the best possible progress. We have also asked the school to improve literacy across the curriculum to help everyone get the best possible results.

Very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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