

Thomas Knyvett College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136832
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	397492
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Christine Raeside HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Tina Crombie
Headteacher	Mrs Rhona Barnfield (Executive Headteacher) Mrs Nicola Aboud (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Christine Raeside

Her Majesty's Inspector

Roger Garrett

Additional inspector

Heather Leatt

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out at one day's notice. Inspectors observed 30 lessons taught by 29 teachers, of which eight were joint observations with members of the senior team. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of lessons, sometimes accompanied by a senior leader. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and college staff, including senior and middle leaders. They took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the college's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the college improvement plan. They also analysed responses to inspection questionnaires completed by 59 parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Thomas Knyvett College is a smaller-than-average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average, about a quarter of the college. About one third of students come from a range of minority ethnic groups and about a fifth speaks English as an additional language, a higher proportion than usual. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and are at the school action stage of support is broadly average; about double the average proportion are at the school action plus stage or have a statement of special educational needs. The numbers of students joining and leaving the college at other than the conventional times is higher than usual. The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The college became part of the Howard Partnership, a federation with Howard of Effingham School, in 2007. The schools share an executive headteacher and some senior leadership. The federation converted to academy status on 1 July 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It is not yet good because improvements in teaching have not yet secured a sustained pattern of good achievement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Rates of progress are improving in all year groups and for all groups of students because of consistently good teaching and the rigorous tracking of individual performance. GCSE results for 2012, many of which are already confirmed, are predicted to be the highest the college has ever achieved.
- Most teachers use assessment information effectively to plan learning that meets the needs of all students. Students achieve well when teachers adjust activities to address misconceptions and accelerate progress. They are less successful when teachers do not adapt their approach to secure understanding for all. There are some good examples of marking which informs students precisely how to develop their work, especially in mathematics and technology. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality and impact of marking across the curriculum.
- Students feel safe at the college. They behave well around the site and in lessons. Students, staff, parents and carers report that standards of behaviour have risen and this is supported by much improved exclusion and attendance figures. However, some also report that there is still some disruption to learning at times. For this reason students' behaviour is, on balance, satisfactory rather than good.
- Senior leaders have effectively established the college vision of 'bringing out the best'. There is a shared determination to secure good achievement for every individual, irrespective of their starting point. A robust intolerance of inadequate practice has led to the stable and effective teaching now in place. Monitoring is robustly linked to performance management and training in order to raise standards.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure sustained rates of progress across all curriculum areas and for all groups of students, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently plan tasks and activities that match the full range of students' needs
 - monitor learning closely, diagnose misconceptions and adjust tasks so that students quickly grasp and embed skills and concepts
 - improve the quality of written feedback so that it is always sharply focused on learning
 - provide opportunities for students to think about, and respond to, marking so that it informs their learning and accelerates their progress.
- In consultation with students and their parents and carers, review and evaluate the quality of behaviour in lessons and take suitable measures to ensure that lessons proceed without interruption and any anxiety about poor behaviour is eradicated.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory because good teaching and rapidly improving rates of progress have eradicated a legacy of low attainment. Achievement is not yet good because improvements in teaching, although now embedded, have not been in place long enough to secure a sustained pattern of high attainment in previous Year 11 cohorts.

Students in Year 11 exemplify the culture of learning that now exists in the college. They spoke to inspectors with pride about their achievements, which include early-entry GCSE mathematics results in line with the national average and set to exceed it by the summer. Similarly, English GCSE results are forecast to match the national average this year. Given that students arrive in the college with attainment well below the national average, this represents good progress.

Students are keen to learn and they respond enthusiastically to good teaching. They discuss grades, levels and targets confidently and know what they need to do to improve. Students describe academic monitoring days, where they discuss their progress against targets, as highly motivational. A range of interventions support them in reaching their targets. In a mathematics revision lesson, forensic analysis of examination performance was used to target learning. The teacher's brisk and highly individualised approach helped students to pinpoint their weaknesses exactly and to sharpen their examination technique.

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Highly sensitive teaching in a small group literacy session enabled Years 8 and 9 boys to develop resilience in tackling difficulties with spelling. They diagnosed common errors and reinforced their understanding of sounds and spelling patterns using a range of motivational strategies. They spoke feelingly about how much the intervention was helping to build their skills and confidence which they were applying in all their classwork.

Any slippage in students' individual progress is effectively tackled. As a result, gaps in achievement between different groups of students are closing. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are achieving at least as well as their peers. The 'school action' group, made up of those vulnerable to underachievement in the past, now exceeds progress measures for the same group nationally, with particular strengths in mathematics. Most parents and carers believe their children are making good progress at the college. Inspectors agree that this is increasingly and sustainably the case.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Teachers demonstrate the determination to improve and develop their practice. Students say that teaching has greatly improved in recent years. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that teaching is now good and evidence from the inspection supports this view.

The best lessons reflect the college's aim: teachers 'bring out the best' in students by designing a range of activities so that everyone is challenged to succeed. They take account of students' literacy needs by planning ways of developing their speaking, reading and writing, as well as developing their subject knowledge. In a Year 7 history lesson, students eagerly discussed factors affecting the popularity of King Edward VI. Prompt cards ensured that no one was stuck for an idea and ranged in complexity so that the balance of guidance and challenge was right for each individual. Questioning was randomly targeted, so that everyone had to think and be ready to answer. As a result, responses were detailed, thoughtful and justified by appropriate evidence.

Although the majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good, some lessons were no more than satisfactory because they relied on one task for all levels of ability or because the teacher did not keep sufficient check on students' understanding to make sure that a brisk pace and good progress were maintained. Students learnt well when a focus on reading was built into their lessons. Year 7 students discussed the impact of violent video games on the people who play them. They were able to think carefully about this important social and moral issue because the lesson, at the outset, taught them how to read and interpret an article which promoted a particular viewpoint.

The whole-college marking system of identifying 'what went well (WWW)' in a piece of work, then how it could be 'even better if...' (EBI) is well understood by students.

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They appreciate the clarity and consistency of this approach. In some books, the EBI element spells out clearly what is needed to take the learning to the next level. This was evident in some mathematics books, where a key learning point was detailed, followed by a problem to try that exemplified the skill. Elsewhere, however, the EBI element is too vague, or based on effort, completion or surface features, so that its impact is reduced and students' responses are limited.

Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs has been thoroughly reviewed since a change in leadership. A new testing regime will help college leaders track the impact of initiatives to boost literacy skills. This is in its early stages, but evidence from students indicates their strong support for curriculum developments that focus on reading. A range of approaches, such as reading buddies, tutors regularly listening to students read and the use of digital texts are designed to encourage and develop reluctant as well as advanced readers. Students spoke with conviction about the impact of this on learning and said that personal reading books are now just 'part of their daily equipment'.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the inspection the behaviour seen was good. Students were friendly, polite and helpful; the college was calm and well-ordered. In lessons, students cooperated with one another well. Overall, behaviour and safety are satisfactory rather than good, however, because of views expressed by some students and their parents and carers about poor behaviour in some lessons. Both groups made reference to the good work of the college in supporting students who exhibit particularly challenging behaviour. They were sympathetic to their behavioural needs, but nonetheless want the college to do more to prevent lessons being interrupted. Inspectors agree that this is needed to ensure that improvements in this area are not dissipated by the actions of a few individuals.

Students feel safe and report that bullying is rare. They learn about different forms of bullying through their tutor time and citizenship lessons. They are well informed and confident that the college will act decisively and effectively to address any concerns that may arise. They appreciate the well-managed systems to promote and reward attendance, which is now in line with the national average. Levels of persistent absence have fallen to below national levels.

Leadership and management

College leaders have faced considerable challenges in effecting lasting change during a period of turbulence, as well as in reversing negative perceptions arising from historic underachievement. Students, parents and carers, and external agencies working with the college all agree that improvements since the college entered The Howard Partnership have been root and branch. One parent described this as 'a complete and sustained transformation over the past four years'.

The professional development of teachers is well managed and sharply focused, with

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training appropriately tailored to the individual. Leadership development is strengthened by the reciprocal professional development opportunities between the schools in the partnership. Improvements are now founded on improved student attitudes, attendance and college leaders' continual evaluation of teaching and the curriculum, so that the capacity for continued improvement is strong.

The curriculum is effectively reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of groups of students and to respond to emerging priorities. Developments include: 'learning to learn' lessons, which introduce Year 7 students to the demands of the secondary curriculum; additional curriculum time for mathematics and English, to maximise progress and support core skill development; and training for teaching assistants to become experts in reading strategies.

The college's unrelenting focus on reading underpins the development of wider social and cultural aspects of learning. It is developing a culture where it is as acceptable to ask for help with reading as it is to be an expert reader. Reluctant readers are motivated by imaginative additions to the programme, such as a visit from an author who had started his career in the world of professional football.

The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is deeply embedded. Parents and carers commented on the good support for disabled students and those with special educational needs, as well as for the most able. The governing body challenges performance routinely, making effective use of assessment information to raise searching questions. Arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and effective. Students are taught how to manage conflict by listening to both sides and agreeing compromise. Some students, in discussion with inspectors, wanted to stress the 'zero tolerance' of any form of racism or discrimination. They spoke feelingly about how deep the commitment to this runs, saying that, when it is discussed in assembly, 'the whole tone changes, everyone falls silent. You can tell our teachers really mean it.'

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

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

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Thomas Knyvett College, Ashford, TW15 3DU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your college recently. We listened carefully to what you had to say and we read your responses to the inspection questionnaire carefully.

Your attainment and the progress you make are improving strongly. This is clear from your GCSE results. Your rates of progress in mathematics and English are accelerating, helped by good teaching and by the whole-college focus on reading. We judge your college to be satisfactory, because, although these improvements are now securely in place, they have not yet led to a pattern of improvement over time.

You learn very well when teachers make sure there is something to challenge everyone and when they check carefully to make sure you all understand. We have asked your teachers to make sure this happens in all lessons. We have also asked them to improve the consistency of marking. You told us that you appreciate clear guidance in your books on how to improve. There are some excellent examples of this, but also some where advice is not clear enough.

Your behaviour when we were in college was good. However, some of you told us, as did some parents and carers, that your lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. We have asked college leaders to address your concerns in this area.

You can help your college to continue improving by:

- continuing to work hard in all lessons to reach your targets and by acting on teachers' advice about how to improve
- taking responsibility for your own behaviour and encouraging others to ensure that learning is uninterrupted.

Yours sincerely

Christine Raeside
Her Majesty's Inspector

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