

# Sir John Thursby Community College

Eastern Avenue, Burnley, Lancashire, BB10 2AT

**Inspection dates** 4–5 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- While attainment improved in 2013, students do not do as well as they should in English, where results are well below the national average.
- There is too much variability in how well the most able students achieve in the school. The most able Year 11 students are achieving less well in English than similar students in other schools.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good and outstanding. The level of challenge in lessons is not always appropriate for some students and work is sometimes too easy.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to think for themselves and extend their ideas in writing; consequently, the quality and quantity of work for too many students is not as good as it should be.
- Feedback to students is inconsistent and does not always provide sufficient information to help them improve their work.
- While there is a clear shift in the school to focus on the achievement of students, the targets set for students do not always place sufficient emphasis on those students who should be making more than expected progress, such as the most able students.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, at all levels and including governors, are determined to improve the achievement of all students. They are already improving the quality of teaching which has led to significant improvement in mathematics.
- Students supported by the pupil premium in 2013 achieved better in English and mathematics than similar pupils nationally. Their attendance is also better than what is found nationally.
- As a result of improvements in teaching, students do particularly well in mathematics, science, French and German.
- Behaviour is good and students feel safe. Students show a positive attitude to their lessons and disruptions are rare. Students are polite and respectful to adults.
- This is an inclusive school that serves its community well. Attendance and exclusion rates are much better than those found nationally. Guidance for further education and employment is excellent.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 part-lessons. Joint observations of lessons were also carried out with three members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, heads of subject departments and a range of other staff. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages and abilities. A meeting was also held with the local authority adviser.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information on how the school monitors teaching and work showing students' progress and attainment, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 51 parents that were made to the on-line questionnaire, (Parent View), as well as parent surveys undertaken by the school. Some parents also contacted the inspection team to express their view. Questionnaires were completed by 95 members of staff.
- The headteacher supports other schools as part of the Future Leader's network and within the local authority.

## Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Shenton

Additional Inspector

Sheila Kaye

Additional Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Sir John Thursby Community College is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both significantly above the national averages.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school makes limited use of alternative provision with Burnley College and one independent provider, Coal Clough.
- The college has achieved various awards: Artsmark Gold, Investors in People and is a lead school for computing.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to be at least good, ensuring students consistently make good or better progress, especially in English, by:
  - setting work that is appropriately challenging for all students, particularly the most able
  - improving the quality and consistency of feedback to students, ensuring that the responses students make are relevant and are clear as to how they can progress
  - ensuring consistency in the way students develop their writing skills and hence improve both the quality and quantity of work produced
  - providing more opportunities for students to think for themselves , maximising the many positive attitudes that students have to their learning
  - ensuring the targets set for all students are suitably challenging, especially for the most able students.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Not enough students are doing as well as they could, especially in English.
- The number of the most able students who make more than expected progress is better in mathematics than English. Information from the school indicates that the number of students making more than expected progress in English is likely to decline this year. This was supported by what inspectors saw in students' books when looking at the progress students had made throughout the year.
- In 2013, the 22% gap between the performance of boys and girls in English was greater than that seen in most schools and contrasts sharply to mathematics where the performance of boys and girls in the school was relatively equal. This is because teaching is generally better in mathematics than it is in English.
- While the gap for those students supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals increased slightly from 2012, with students typically achieving nearly one GCSE grade lower in English and mathematics, the gaps found in performances are significantly smaller than those found nationally and are closing over time. This shows that the school is successfully closing any gaps in performance for this group of students and promoting equality of opportunity.
- Results in English were also weak for Bangladeshi students, where only 26% of students achieved a GCSE good pass. The progress of this group of students within the school at the moment is much better, with outcomes in 2014 predicted to improve sharply.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by a statement make particularly good progress because of the good support that they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Students identified as requiring school action and school action plus often make rapid progress from their starting points. Many have behavioural, emotional and social needs which are well supported by many strategies that the school puts in place, such as an on-site counsellor. Current information from the school indicates that these students in other year groups are on track to make similar rapid progress.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, there have been improvements in their ability to read and write with many making rapid progress, such as one year's progress in just four months.
- Reading generally in the school is variable, as is the way students have confidence in speaking. There are strategies in place to address these issues, but, as yet, the impact has not been seen in student outcomes across all subjects.
- From their starting points, students achieve particularly well in art, science, geography and German. Students also do well in vocational subjects delivered within school.
- The school has reviewed courses taken in other establishments and now provides most courses within the school. The very few students taking courses outside the school receive good support and generally achieve well.
- In the past, students have been entered early for GCSE mathematics and then moved on to an alternative mathematics course. This strategy has been reviewed and modified because some students, particularly the most able students, have been prevented from achieving as well as they should. The school's projections indicate that achievement for all students in mathematics in 2014 will address this issue.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, has improved, rising by 10 percentage points in 2013. While GCSE passes are still below the national average, for some students, taking into account their starting points, they have made good progress, especially in mathematics.

**The quality of teaching****requires improvement**

- Although teaching is improving, it still requires improvement because not enough is consistently good or outstanding, especially in English.
- Students' progress is weaker when they are provided with the same work; teachers do not plan sufficiently for the progress of all students by varying activities or adapting resources and questioning. This is especially noticeable for the most able, where work does not always provide sufficient challenge to enable these students to develop the skills they need to obtain higher grades.
- Students are not given sufficient opportunities to think for themselves and develop their speaking skills across all subject areas.
- In a range of subjects and especially in English, students' learning is not always as strong as it could be because they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their ideas and extend both the quality and quantity of the work that they produce.
- Marking and feedback to students are too variable. There are examples of good practice where students are given very clear guidance on how to improve to the next level or grade. However, there are too many examples of marking that is too general and not specific, which are not helping students progress. The school has introduced a framework for providing feedback and for students to respond to this feedback, the 'Learning Milestone', but this is not consistently used by all teachers.
- There is now a clear focus on improving literacy, though many of the strategies are still in the early stages. A primary-trained teacher has been employed by the school to deliver additional lessons to small groups of students. As a result of this support, the improvement in reading and writing skills for these students is excellent, with some making exceptional progress in a relatively short period of time.
- Leaders have addressed underperformance in several subject areas with a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and securing effective leadership. Improvements are most noticeable in mathematics, and design and technology, where most students are now achieving well. This successful strategy has now begun in English, but the impact is yet to be seen fully.
- Where students make rapid progress, teachers have very high expectations, ask questions which challenge all students, and have a good knowledge of levels and grades which they share with students. This was particularly evident in a German lesson, where students were eager to improve due to the high aspirations set by the teacher. Likewise, in an art lesson, the teacher skilfully shaped questions to ensure that students were challenged to improve their responses further and refine their analytical skills.
- The school now has a more accurate view of the quality of teaching having reviewed its systems for monitoring and judging teaching. Joint observations undertaken by senior leaders with inspectors matched with the school's views on strengths and weaknesses, though leaders sometimes put too much emphasis on the teaching rather than the learning that takes place.
- There are very positive relationships between teachers and students which help to create a good foundation for learning to take place.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. The vast majority of students have very positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to engage in lessons.
- Students are extremely polite and respectful, both to other students and adults. They look very smart and demonstrate a great deal of pride in their school. It is particularly noticeable how all students, including those with disabilities, are fully involved in every aspect of school life. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.

- Attendance is very good and above the national average; students like coming to school. Almost 10% of all students have 100% attendance and the attendance of those students supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly better than that found nationally.
- Exclusions, including permanent exclusions, are very rare. This is due to the work that the school does on engaging all students as well as having clear systems for dealing with behaviour. The work on keeping exclusions so low reflects the school's values in taking responsibility for all its students and ensuring they have opportunities to succeed.
- Behaviour in lessons is better than that observed outside of lessons where some students do not move with enough urgency to their lessons and are quite reliant on staff reminding them to move on. Students are not yet fully self-disciplined and take complete responsibility for all aspects of their behaviour.
- Some parents and staff expressed concerns about the behaviour of students; however, this would not be fully supported with what inspectors observed and the records kept by the school. Behaviour is well managed and policies consistently applied.
- There are clear systems in place for both sanctions and rewards. The newly created rewards system, where students can exchange their 'Thursby Dollars' is very popular among students.
- The school site is well respected by students; litter is very rare and there is no graffiti.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and secure in the school and are made aware of all types of bullying, including being safe on line and other issues through the school's programme of additional activities. The responses from parents indicate that a very large majority of parents agree that students are well cared for and feel safe at school.
- Students say that racist and homophobic bullying is very rare and always dealt with. Records from the school show that when words are used inappropriately they are always followed up with students being taught the impact and consequences of using such words.
- Students play an active role in the community, either through events and multi-faith festivals or through local groups to support charity aid work. The emphasis on participation in wider events ensures that students have the opportunity to develop skills that will make them responsible citizens, such as the Unicef Rights and Respect project. International links with schools in Germany and Africa further promote students' appreciation of their role in a wider, global society.
- The school actively works with the 'Prevent' team to explore issues such as hate crime and extremism. Students also visit local primary schools to support projects on diversity.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is determined to improve the life chances of all students at the school by a relentless focus on improving achievement and showing students what a difference education can make. Within a relatively short time he has robustly addressed key areas in teaching, such as mathematics, and is establishing a clear plan for the school and the community.
- Along with the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and its role within the community. Leaders know their school well and what it will take to ensure sustained success in the future. They have effectively communicated their expectations for maintaining the school's high standards for care and guidance, but are now beginning to match this with better progress for students, although there still needs to be a greater emphasis on the performance of the most able.
- Senior leaders have now established accurate systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. Judgements on teaching now consider the impact on student progress, which is more realistic. Where teaching falls below expectations support and strategies to improve are quickly put in place. The support, in particular, to staff new to teaching is comprehensive and gives them a good start to their career.
- Improvements have been made in the way that leaders of those students with special



educational needs monitor and provide support, such as strategies for teachers and the deployment of teaching assistants. The monitoring of how well these students are achieving, however, is not as robust.

- Heads of subject departments understand the school's priorities and recognise their role in improving teaching. As a group, they are an increasing strength within the school. There are clear systems in place for them checking how well their subjects are doing; however, this is not yet consistently used among all heads of subject departments.
- Improvement plans clearly identify the main priorities for the school and demonstrate that leaders know what to do in order to improve the school further. There is, however, insufficient reference to the most able students and those who are expected to make more than expected progress.
- The curriculum has recently been reviewed, reflecting the school's higher aspirations by introducing more academic courses and increasing the time students spend on individual GCSE courses. Students like that they can start studying GCSE subjects in Year 9.
- The school has a wide range of enrichment activities such as trips, visits and a wide range of clubs which promote the multi-faith profile of the school and the community. These provide students with opportunities and experiences to develop both their cultural and social skills.
- The guidance that students receive is excellent. Students are made fully aware of career opportunities through the 'Job Junction' within the school and are also given direct experience of university life. These, along with other strategies such as the careers education programme, ensure that students are successfully prepared for the next stages in their education or employment and contribute to zero NEET figures – students not in education, employment or training.
- The local authority is aware of the successes of the school and the areas for improvement. The school has been selective with the support that it has obtained from the local authority, recognising variations in the quality of that support.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are clear and meet statutory requirements. The school takes effective steps to ensure the safety of the few students who attend courses away from the school site.
- Leaders have reviewed how targets are set and there is now an expectation that all students should make expected progress. Targets for those students who are expected to make more than expected progress are not as fully established; likewise, targets for some students are not as challenging as they could be.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have ensured that performance management of staff is fair, rigorous and linked to Teacher's Standards. Pay progression is clearly linked to the outcomes of students and the quality of teaching. Performance management for non-teaching staff does not always focus sufficiently on outcomes for students.

### **The governance of the school:**

- There have been significant actions taken since the previous inspection to improve the effectiveness of the governing body; this includes additional recruitment and training. Consequently, governors are now more able to identify how well the school is doing and demonstrate a clear understanding of what the school has to do to improve further. They robustly deal with weaker teaching and have high expectations of all staff.
- The structure of the governing body has been reviewed to match the priorities of the school. Minutes of the meetings of these sub-committees show that governors are robust in monitoring the outcomes of most groups of students, especially those students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium. The monitoring of the most able students and those expected to make more than expected progress is less developed.
- Governors are actively involved in the life of the school in several ways, including being linked to departments, providing multi-faith activities, promoting literacy and having a significant role in the 'Jobs Junction', which aims to improve employability for both students within the school and the community. Attendance at school events, such as parents' evenings, has helped to raise the profile of governors among parents.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134996
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	440897

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	989
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	S Biggs
<b>Headteacher</b>	D Burton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 June 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01282 682313
<b>Fax number</b>	01282 682314
<b>Email address</b>	manager@sirjohnthursby.lancs.sch.uk

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