

# The Community College Whitstable

Bellevue Road, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1PX

**Inspection dates** 3–4 March 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Senior leaders do not use information about the achievements of students in previous years well enough to drive improvements in current teaching and learning.
- The college judges its own performance too generously. Judgements of the quality of teaching do not give enough regard to how well students are learning, and the progress they are making.
- The majority of students arrive at the college with lower than average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Many make less progress than expected, so their achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 is not good enough.
- Disadvantaged students are not making enough progress to close achievement gaps between them and others rapidly.
- Too few of the more-able students achieve high enough grades at GCSE.
- Students' progress in the sixth form is not good enough in many subjects.
- Too little teaching provides for the needs of students of all abilities. The pace of learning is not gauged rigorously or often enough by teachers in many lessons.
- Developing students' literacy skills is not a sufficiently obvious priority in all lessons.
- There is some poor behaviour in lessons. Too few parents and staff are confident about the effectiveness of the college's responses to poor behaviour.
- Students are not prepared well for life in modern Britain. They want and need more information and discussion about important issues such as equalities, democratic processes, and how the legal system works.
- Governors are not presenting good levels of challenge to the leadership of the college because they are not using a wide range of indicators of how well it is doing, well enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- There are improving trends in students' achievements in English and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics, science and some other subjects.
- The college offers a pleasant, safe and caring environment for students.
- The majority of students are willing learners and rightly trust that staff have their best interests at heart.
- Much of the marking of students' work is useful, and helps students to improve their work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons and made shorter visits to five others, several jointly with senior staff.
- Inspectors met with senior staff, representatives of the governing body, other staff, groups of students, and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The college’s development planning and self-evaluation documents, policies and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- The 61 responses to Parent View were taken into account, as were the views of the 61 staff who returned questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Alan Taylor-Bennett, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Theresa Phillips	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Mary Davies	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Community College Whitstable is smaller than the average-size school.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is higher than average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above the national average. Some students are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The college serves a community with relatively little ethnic or cultural diversity.
- Six students in Key Stage 4 attend part time at Canterbury Employability Centre to pursue specialist vocational courses.
- The college does not meet the government's current floor standard which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to enable students to make better progress, especially disadvantaged students, those who are more able, and students in the sixth form, by:
  - planning lessons to ensure that work is much more closely matched to the needs of students of different abilities, and offers consistently appropriate levels of challenge and support to everyone
  - continually checking the security and the pace of students' grasp of key concepts in lessons by a variety of means, including probing questioning, and using the information obtained to steer teaching
  - strengthening strategies to address students' literacy needs across all subjects.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - improving the college's self-evaluation processes, responding quickly to any shortfalls in achievement with appropriate actions to improve teaching and learning
  - placing greater emphasis on checking the progress that different groups of students make from their various starting points when evaluating the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that the governing body uses a wide range of information about all aspects of the college's performance to provide more effective challenge to senior leaders about the pace of improvements and the impact of initiatives.
- Address shortfalls in the understanding of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 about democratic processes, the rule of law and its relationship to individual liberty, and different cultures, beliefs and sexual orientations, to prepare them better for life in modern Britain.

An external review of the college's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- The college's self-evaluation is too optimistic. This is because information about the progress that different groups of students have made in the past is not closely enough associated with strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Sometimes, other factors are introduced to 'explain' underperformance, when the real issue is how effective teaching is. Equality of opportunity is therefore not well promoted.
- The systems in place to improve the quality of teaching are appropriately wide ranging and well organised. They have had some good effects on the quality of teaching and learning. For example, students' learning in English and in science is now better than it has been over recent years because teaching in those departments has improved. Senior staff are well trained in lesson observation techniques and their judgements agreed with those of inspectors during joint observations of teaching and learning. However, overall judgements of the quality of teaching are too generous because students' progress is not taken into account sufficiently. This limits the college's capacity to improve this important aspect of its work.
- Senior leaders give a consistent and very high priority to safeguarding and child protection. They are justly proud of their record of caring for students, some of whom have complex and profound difficulties in their private lives. Systems to ensure students' safety are good and are constantly evaluated, which means that when there is the need to respond to situations, staff can do so quickly and effectively.
- The quality of the leadership of subject areas has been very variable over recent years. There have been improvements, notably in English and in science, and some remains strong, for example in the creative and performing arts. However, some middle leaders are not yet driving up the quality of teaching and learning rapidly in their areas.
- The monitoring of students' progress in each subject has been improved recently. Systems have the capacity to generate a lot of potentially useful information about how well individuals, and groups of students, are doing. This information is used well to direct students to a range of 'catch-up' activities, especially in Year 11, including Saturday morning school. However, too little use is made of this information to check the quality of teaching across the college and take action where it is not good.
- The college recognises the important role that parents can play in supporting higher levels of achievement. There is a Parent Family Forum, but few parents play an active part in this, and there are too few opportunities for parents to learn about how their children acquire better literacy and numeracy skills, so that they can help and support them in appropriate ways.
- The college's ethos supports a spirit of fairness, tolerance and good order. Learning coach time and assemblies often present an interesting range of ideas and information to students. However, students themselves said that they feel under educated about some important aspects of life. Several Key Stage 4 students said they have little idea of how our democracy works, in the processes around the forthcoming General Election, or about the country's legal processes.
- Equality of opportunity is highlighted in various ways in the college, including in displays about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues around the site. Students rightly say that they would like to learn more about equalities and look to the college to give a stronger steer on helping them to understand different cultures, religious beliefs, and issues around the expression of sexual orientation.
- There is a good range of subjects on offer in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students have an appropriately wide range of opportunities to develop their individual skills and talents in areas as diverse as construction, film and media studies, sociology and project-based learning. The college's website provides useful information about many of these subject areas. A small number of students attend courses elsewhere for part of the week to pursue specialist vocational courses.
- Previously, fewer students than average have moved into sustained education or employment and training at the end of Key Stage 4. The situation is improving and the proportion of students not in employment, education or training is decreasing. The college gives students a clear and unbiased view of their options post-16, and Year 11 students have the services of an information, advice and guidance adviser.
- There is a palpable sense of urgency among leaders to drive up the achievement of disadvantaged pupils through effective use of the pupil premium. However, the college does not check carefully enough that what the money is spent on makes a difference, so too few students catch up on previously low attainment. The indicators in the college website report to parents on the performance of disadvantaged students gives too positive a picture about the college's success in this area of its work.
- The college has good links with other local schools, including playing an active part in the Coastal Alliance of two secondary and 14 primary schools. There is some useful work underway to develop common assessment systems to meet the needs of the new National Curriculum.
- The college is ill served by local authority analyses and reports of its performance that confuse

improvement with genuine strengths, and support an over-optimistic picture of its performance. Other consultants employed by the college, including in English, have had a significantly better impact on its work.

#### ■ The governance of the college:

- Governors are not always rigorous in their questioning of the headteacher and senior staff about how judgements of the college's effectiveness are arrived at, and how they sit alongside each other. For example, governors debated the college's judgement of students' achievement and the quality of teaching, both in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. However, they did not take into account the implications of the college performing below the government's floor standard in recent years, or the significance of some indicators of weaker progress by the end of Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, to question judgements of teaching sufficiently closely. There is a potentially very powerful set of skills and talents represented on the governing body. Governors clearly have the best interests of students, staff and the community at heart. They have undertaken training in the interpretation of performance data to be able to inform themselves better about the college's performance, and during the inspection demonstrated a willingness to improve their impact. Governors exercise appropriate oversight of performance management arrangements to ensure that only the very best teaching is rewarded by pay rises.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### require improvement

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- The vast majority of students are willing learners and show interest in their work. Too few have the confidence to test the extent of their own understanding of key ideas, for example by asking probing questions of their teachers and each other.
- Behaviour in the majority of lessons is either good or at least compliant, but in some lessons it is not good enough. Inspectors saw some instances of misbehaviour, and students wasting valuable lesson time by chatting. Students themselves feel that poor behaviour by a few students sometimes prevents them learning well.
- Students socialise happily around the site at break and lunchtimes, sitting in groups talking or listening to music. The college has a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.
- Some students have high levels of need, due to complex personal circumstances. The college takes steps to identify potential problems as early as possible. Staff are usually quick to detect problems with students, and respond effectively. There are very good links with a range of external support agencies.
- Attendance is below average, but has improved over recent years. This is a reflection of the effectiveness of systems to respond to avoidable absence. Instances of exclusion have also decreased markedly over recent years and there are signs of the new behaviour policy having a positive effect.
- Students say they feel safe in the college, but there are occasional unkind comments based on the appearance of students from different cultures and backgrounds; students say that they know racism is wrong and like to see a firm response taken to such incidents.
- A significant minority of staff indicated they are not confident with the general standard of behaviour, nor the ways in which the college manages poor behaviour. The rate of response to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents about the work of the college) was low by the end of the inspection, but only around two thirds of parents who responded indicated confidence about the standard of students' behaviour and the college's response to bullying.

#### Safety

- The college's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students are confident that the college will help them if they have worries about any aspect of their schooling, or their personal lives. They say that there is always an adult to speak to, and that they are confident that an effective response will be made. They feel well looked after.
- Despite generally high levels of awareness of e-safety in the college, there are some incidents of unpleasant comments in online social media. Not all students have signed up to the college's policy on the use of computers and on-line safety and conduct.
- All procedures around the safeguarding of students are given an appropriately high priority in the college. Staff are justifiably proud of the rigour with which they follow the clear policies in place, undertake training regularly and follow all statutory procedures. There are good links with outside agencies such as the local authority run Local Inclusion Forum Team.

- The monitoring of the progress, welfare and attendance of students who attend other providers for part of the week is good, and ensures their safety.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although teaching has improved in several areas recently, notably in science and mathematics, it remains of very variable quality across the college. Students say that, even within one department, the quality of their learning depends too much 'on who you have'.
- The best teaching provides clear direction to learning and involves good quality explanations. Students usually respond very well in such lessons, and work hard. But even in the best lessons seen during the inspection, there was not always a good match of work to the needs of different groups.
- Senior staff are training teachers to check students' progress more often throughout lessons, and to continually respond to what they learn about how well ideas are being understood. This skill is not yet demonstrated in whole-class teaching in some classrooms, so that lessons proceed without students necessarily understanding all aspects of the work.
- Students' standards of literacy are often lower than average when they arrive in Year 7. The college is very well aware of this and there are good policies and procedures in place to provide a common approach across lessons to this issue. There are indications that many students are becoming more confident readers and writers as a result, but not all teaching is making this an obvious priority.
- Students' work is marked with appropriate regularity, and the feedback gives useful indications of 'what went well' and how work could have been better. Students said that they felt pleased with the quality of feedback given, and inspectors saw this as a strength in the teaching in many classrooms. Sometimes work in books is untidy and poorly organised on the page. This is addressed in some of the marking, but not consistently within departments or across the college.
- The college presents many opportunities to broaden students' cultural development. For example, art students recently contributed photography and textiles to a local art exhibition, and the college recently put on a performance by a youth production company set up by a Year 13 student. There are a range of other opportunities to encourage reflection on significant issues, demonstrated clearly by the 'CWW Remembrance Poppy' on which all students and staff wrote a message last November, and the centenary visit to Ypres. The all-age tutor groups are a successful way of ensuring that students socialise with a wide range of other members of the community and get the opportunity to share views and opinions.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students' rates of progress vary too widely across different subjects. This is a consequence of the variations in the quality of teaching in different departments in the college.
- In English, students' achievement has improved over recent years and the overall progress made by the end of Key Stage 4 in 2014 was only slightly below the national average. Students achieve grades in English broadly similar to the national average. In mathematics, improvement is slower but is beginning to accelerate. On average, students achieved about two thirds of a grade lower than the national average in this subject in 2014. The proportion making the progress expected of them by the end of Key Stage 4 in mathematics over recent years has been low, but there are signs that it is improving.
- Achievement in science has also improved over the last year and students are now enjoying grappling with more demanding scientific concepts and doing more practical work. Other subjects, such as art and design, dance, drama and music, are maintaining good levels of achievement and students enjoy the challenge and the opportunities these subjects offer.
- Some students have been entered for examinations earlier than at the end of Key Stage 4. This was not boosting achievement and the practice is now limited to securing examination grades for those in danger of not achieving well in the summer of their Year 11 due to personal circumstances.
- Girls made significantly better progress than boys by the end of Key Stage 4 in 2014. The college is aware of the need to improve boys' progress and has made appropriate plans to do so.
- The progress of disadvantaged students has not been rapid enough for them to catch up and close attainment gaps with other students by the end of Key Stage 4. On average, disadvantaged students achieved around a whole grade less in English than other students in the college and other students nationally. In mathematics they achieved around a grade less than others in the college, and about one and a half grades lower than the national average. Better progress is currently being made by disadvantaged students in Key Stage 4.



- Students with disabilities or special educational needs are supported well, and there are good systems in place to assist them in lessons and in the Additional Educational Needs department. Not all teachers are sensitive to the need to provide different kinds of challenges and resources in lessons, to help these students to achieve well. As a consequence, they do not make good progress overall.
- The catch-up premium is used well to support Year 7 students who arrive with reading or mathematics skills below those expected for their age. Last year, for example, a high proportion of these students in Key Stage 3 made better than expected progress in mathematics as a result of additional targeted support. Good numbers made progress in reading and comprehension skills after extra support based on phonics (the sounds that letters make) and small group teaching.
- The most-able students make less progress than they should. Senior leaders and governors are aware that the overall weaker achievement of this group of students is a reflection of the need to increase levels of expectation. Some Year 11 students themselves said that more could be asked of them in many lessons, and that the amount of homework they were given could be greater and better focused on preparing them for examinations.
- Students who attend Canterbury Employability Centre benefit from the courses on offer there and achieve level 1 and some level 2 qualifications, such as food hygiene and some construction qualifications. They follow courses in mathematics and English, and other subjects, in their time back at the college.

### The sixth form provision

### requires improvement

- The college meets both the academic and vocational minimum standards. However, too few students make good progress over their time in the sixth form. Recent actions by leaders to address this are starting to produce improvements in achievement.
- Teaching in the sixth form is variable, but it is better than in Key Stages 3 and 4. Where teaching is good, teachers respond to students' individual needs, and ensure that there is appropriate challenge and support, and that a spirit of individual enquiry is fostered. But, not all teachers use assessment data to ensure that challenges are set at the right level for all students.
- Despite the relatively small size of this sixth form, there is an appropriate range of vocational and academic courses on offer. There is provision for students who have not achieved at least a grade C in English or mathematics when they join Year 12.
- Careers advice and guidance help to prepare students well for the next stage of their education, employment or training. There have been some notable successes in university applications and these are used to inspire and motivate current students. The proportion of students achieving university places is rising.
- The proportion of students who stay on from Year 12 to Year 13 is lower than the national average. Some students only plan to complete Year 12, and choose their courses appropriately. The careful checking of the destinations of students who leave at the end of Year 12 and Year 13 reveals that almost everyone moves on to employment, training or other education.
- Students enjoy the sixth form. They are attentive in lessons and conduct themselves very well around the college. Students have a range of opportunities for personal development, including mentoring younger students. They play a good part in the all-age tutor groups.
- The senior leadership of the sixth form has undergone changes recently. Leaders do not have a thorough understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. New systems designed to raise expectations include the setting of higher targets, and students' progress being monitored much more closely, but these have not yet led to good plans for rapid improvement.

## 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>	118803
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	456312

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	795
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	121
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Clarissa Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sullivan-Tighe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2–3 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01227 272362
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