



Ullswater Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112393
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278921
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Janet Palmer

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | Wetheriggs Lane |
| School category | Foundation | | Penrith |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 | | Cumbria, CA11 8NG |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01768 242160 |
| Number on roll | 1458 | Fax number | 01768 242165 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Geyve Walker |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 October 2000 | Headteacher | Mr Stewart Gimber |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 11 to 19 | 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006 | 278921 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ullswater Community College is an 11 – 19 years comprehensive school serving the biggest catchment area in England which it shares with Cumbria's only selective grammar school. In September 2003 the college became a Business and Enterprise Specialist college. It is larger than average with 1458 students on roll. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is above the national average and the school is strategically resourced for 40 students with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The senior managers at Ullswater Community College and the inspection team agreed the effectiveness of the college to be satisfactory overall with some particularly good elements of provision.

The college is very well led by the headteacher, ably supported by an effective senior team and governing body. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed successfully. The college has good capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money. Heads of department are beginning to use performance data effectively to track student progress and to identify any areas of underachievement.

Students achieve well at Key Stage 3 in the core subjects, particularly in English. At Key Stage 4 the standards reached are satisfactory and A* to C grades at GCSE are improving although they are still below the college's target.

Teachers work very hard to ensure good personal development and well being of the students. Students are confident and good natured and generally behave very well in the classroom and around the college. They are well cared for by a dedicated staff and there is particularly good provision for those with specific learning needs. The college provides a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities which are popular with students and well-matched to suit their needs and abilities.

The quality of teaching is good in some subjects but needs to improve in others to ensure that all students progress well.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the Sixth Form is good with some outstanding features. General Certificate of Education (GCE) results are above average and achievement is good. Teaching is good and helps students to develop independent learning and study skills. The Sixth Form is well led and the care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is particularly good and they are highly appreciative of the commitment, dedication and approachability of their teachers. Students particularly value the high aspirations that are fostered.

Personal development and well-being are very strong. Students are very confident, articulate and mature, and have excellent relationships with each other, their teachers and younger students. They make an extensive and very valuable contribution to the rest of the school and to the wider community, including helping in the transition from primary to secondary school, organising whole school events and supporting students with special needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of assessment data and the tracking of progress in order to target support for students and raise standards.

- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching and learning to raise standards, particularly in foundation subjects and at key stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards of students are satisfactory in the 11-16 phase and good in the 6th form. They make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9 and reach expected levels in national tests for mathematics, English and science.

The standards reached by students in years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. The number of students achieving A* to C grades at GCSE has improved from 36% to 41% since 2003 but this is below the college's target of 50%. Students' grades are higher in English and mathematics than in most other subjects. Compared to similar schools in the country, students make satisfactory progress given their levels of attainment when they joined the college.

The college has introduced new initiatives in improving, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning which include a greater focus on target-setting and changes to the curriculum to help meet the needs of all students. These initiatives are having a positive effect on standards and progress in lessons. This is confirmed by the recent GCSE English and Mathematics results which show standards are improving.

The college has successfully identified areas for improvement and has taken steps to help underachieving students. Students with learning difficulties progress as well as their peers because they receive good, targeted support. Those with severe learning difficulties and impairments are encouraged to prepare well for independent living and they achieve their targets.

In the sixth form standards are above average and students make good progress. Results have improved year on year and students do particularly well in vocational subjects and in A level general studies. The percentage of students gaining A or B grades is increasing each year and is above the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students is good. The majority behave very well and good relationships exist between teachers and students. However, the college recognises that the behaviour of a relatively small number has an adverse effect on progress in some lessons and they are taking appropriate action to tackle this.

Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and is now similar to that in most other schools. The vast majority of students enjoy coming to college and take a full part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The very effective college council is one of the many ways in which students are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the college and the wider community. They are encouraged to adopt

healthy lifestyles, for example through work in personal, social and health education and food technology lessons and through participation in extra-curricular sport.

The requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not met although the college does provide opportunities for regular worship through the college chaplain and other local clergy. Keenly aware of the relatively narrow range of cultures represented in its immediate locality, the college ensures that good opportunities are provided for students to appreciate and respect the breadth of cultural and ethnic traditions found in the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in years 7 to 11 and good in the 6th form. The majority of lessons are well planned and engage the students in interesting and challenging activities. Students enjoy most lessons and relationships in the classroom between each other and with their teachers are good. Teachers generally have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. They try hard to match the lesson to the needs of the students by providing work at different levels and offering extra help where required. Most students are keen and responsive in class and they make satisfactory progress.

Students with learning difficulties are well catered for. They are well supported by effective teaching assistants and this promotes their participation and achievement.

Most lessons are well paced and varied and teachers use a range of appropriate resources to engage the students. In a few lessons disruption by some pupils negatively affects the progress of the whole class.

Most of the students' written work was marked by teachers and there were some good examples of detailed, informative feedback. However, this is not consistently the case and some assessments do not make clear enough precisely what students need to do to improve. In the 6th form, work is marked very effectively and students are set appropriate and challenging targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The college offers a good curriculum that has improved since the last inspection. The extensive liaison that takes place with the 28 feeder primary schools ensures that students joining the college at age 11 have a very secure start and the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who are talented, are well met.

The curriculum offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses, particularly for pupils aged 14 to 19 and this is enriched through the specialist status of the

Business and Enterprise College. An impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities help to develop students' talents, interests and aptitudes outside the classroom. Most students participate in these activities.

The college responds well to local needs by including work-related courses that reflect the local economy, as well as the interests and aptitudes of individual students. Personal, health and social education encourages them to lead safe and healthy lives and to understand the responsibility of being a citizen.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The college provides good care, guidance and support for its students in years 7 to 11 and very good provision for those who have profound learning or emotional needs or have a physical disability. It is also successful in dealing with vulnerable students, for example, carers and those at risk of exclusion. In the 6th form care, guidance and support is outstanding.

The college has excellent links with outside agencies who contribute well to the overall quality of this provision. Child protection procedures are clear and well understood by staff. Arrangements for transition from primary schools are very good, as are those to help students into higher education or the world of work.

Students feel safe in school and, on the relatively rare occasion that bullying occurs, appreciate that it is speedily and thoroughly dealt with. Effective systems for monitoring students' academic progress are in place but students themselves are not always clear about their targets or specific ways in which they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and the senior management team provide very good leadership. The college is managed satisfactorily overall and particularly well in the 6th form. The leadership team has a shared vision and commitment to continuous improvement and relationships within the team and across the college are good. Day-to-day management is effective and the college runs smoothly.

Subject leaders have embraced the need to evaluate the work of their departments and to take effective action to improve standards. They appreciate the teaching, learning and assessment initiatives the senior team have introduced and are working hard to ensure teachers implement them consistently. They value the high quality support and challenge they receive to improve the quality of teaching and learning within their subjects. They are beginning to use student performance data effectively to track student progress and to identify underachievement in both teaching and learning. At present this is still in the developmental stage, but progress has been

made over the last year. Systems to manage the performance of staff are effective and are well linked to opportunities for training and development.

The college's self-evaluation report is accurate and detailed and senior managers are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. Development planning clearly identifies key priorities based on a careful analysis of student progress and extensive consultation with students as well as staff and parents. Students are pleased that their views are taken into account and this is reflected in the mature way that most conduct themselves.

Governors also know the college well and are aware of what needs to be done to improve further. They are committed and supportive and carry out their responsibilities effectively. Financial management is secure. The headteacher, business manager and governors have worked hard and very effectively to reduce a substantial deficit budget while maintaining staffing ratios. Staff and resources are well deployed and the college gives satisfactory value for money.

In less than two years the current leadership team, ably led by the headteacher, has established a drive for college improvement within a climate of trust, consultation and consensus. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the college has good capacity to improve.

Inspection judgements

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | NA | |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 1 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----------------------|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 3 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | insufficient evidence |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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13 January 2006

Dear Students

I would like thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so very welcome at your college. We appreciate the time many of you gave to tell us about your work and other activities.

These were the things that we found out about Ullswater Community College during our visit:

The college is very well led and all the staff are working hard to ensure that you get the best possible education.

Your teachers are very good at making sure you are well-cared for and given good guidance (particularly in the 6th form where the care and guidance is outstanding).

The 6th formers make a very valuable contribution to the rest of the school and to the local community

Most of you are well behaved, confident and mature and get on well with your teachers and each other. However, in a few lessons there are some disruptive students and their behaviour can sometimes affect the progress of the whole class. Your teachers are taking appropriate action to tackle this and you should support them.

You have told us you enjoy coming to college and feel safe and secure and that on the rare occasion that bullying does occur, it is quickly and effectively dealt with by the teachers.

The Business and Enterprise specialism has enriched the curriculum and the college now provides a very wide range of subjects for you to study, particularly at key stage 4 and in the 6th form, and many different extra-curricular activities which are very popular.

Students at Ullswater Community College do well in maths and science and particularly well in English at key stage 3 and results in the 6th form are above average.

Your teachers plan their lessons well and find interesting and challenging activities for you to do. They have high expectations and most of you are keen and enthusiastic in class. Your teachers are looking at new ways to develop their teaching skills and we recommend that they continue to do this to ensure students make good progress in all lessons.

Your teachers have begun to assess your work and monitor your progress in greater detail but, at the moment, you are not always clear about your targets or specific ways you can improve your work. We are recommending that your teachers continue to improve the way they track your progress to help you achieve higher standards. You can help them to do this by continuing to work hard and listen to their advice.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for welcoming us into your college and being so friendly and polite. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector