



# The Community College, Bishop's Castle

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 123564  
**Local Authority** Shropshire  
**Inspection number** 292713  
**Inspection dates** 1–2 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Kathleen Smith HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Brampton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Bishops Castle
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		SY9 5AY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01588 638257
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	506	<b>Fax number</b>	01588 630034
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	82		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Justin Coldwell
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Terry Hunt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 November 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	1–2 November 2006	292713

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average college, with a small sixth form, serving a wide, sparsely populated rural area of Shropshire and parts of Powys. It attracts approximately 20% of its students from over the Welsh border, although the number varies from year to year. The college is used as a community resource for an extensive rural area, providing cultural, educational and sporting facilities for children, students and adults. The percentage of students entitled to free college meals is below average. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with statements of special educational need are above average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is a satisfactory college with some good aspects. Students make satisfactory progress throughout the college. Their attainment on joining the college is above average and they reach above average standards by the time they leave Year 11. Students' personal development is good and this is a strength of the college.

The college provides a learning environment that welcomes all, through its role as a community resource. This is done very well and reinforces the importance the college attaches to the good care, guidance and support it provides for all its students and to their good personal development. Students enjoy coming to the college, and this is reflected in their good behaviour and attendance. They feel safe and develop good relationships with staff and other students, knowing who to turn to if they have a concern. Students respond well to the healthy choices of food available at lunchtime. The high take-up of sporting activities, in and out of college time, reflects their interest in adopting healthy lifestyles. The college's very good extra-curricular opportunities are well used to develop a range of interests and pastimes. Older students contribute well to the college, helping to run a range of activities and becoming involved in support roles, for example as 'peer mediators'.

The curriculum is good for students in Years 7-11, and satisfactory in the sixth form. The arrangements for work experience and careers advice ensure students are well prepared for the world of work.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and lead to satisfactory achievement. Not enough use is made of assessment and marking to support learning, and this means that activities are not always matched to the needs of all students.

The leadership and management of the college, also satisfactory, have been revitalised by the formation of a new senior leadership team. Initiatives such as developments in the tracking and monitoring of students' achievements have been effective in bringing about improvement, especially in English. The leadership team has focused clearly on raising the quality of teaching. This has improved the consistency of teaching across subject areas and there are signs that this improvement is gathering pace. The programme of monitoring teaching has not, however, focused sufficiently on how well students learn, so that the effect of teaching can be observed. Similarly, the monitoring systems used by the leadership team are not sufficiently rigorous, particularly in seeing what impact recent developments have had on standards and achievement. The college's most recent self-evaluation corresponds largely with inspection judgements and issues from the last inspection have been tackled successfully, indicating the college has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Examination results are in line with the national average. Students' achievements are satisfactory but vary

between subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. More than half of the main college students move on to the sixth form and can choose from a reasonable range of advanced level subjects, although the choice of vocational courses is more limited. Most students complete the courses on which they embark and attendance is good. Almost all students take up university places and gain an accreditation in the subjects they choose to study. Students' personal development is satisfactory and they regularly support younger students and are good role models. Students feel well supported by subject staff and their tutors who work well together to monitor and support students' progress. However, parents are not sufficiently informed about students' progress, an issue recognised as a priority for action by the college. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is a clear focus on improving the operation of the current sixth form, but there is no explicit vision for how the development and expansion of its provision fits into the overall future of the college.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality and consistency of the marking and assessment of students' work.
- When evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, focus clearly on learning and the impact of teaching on learning.
- Make monitoring systems more rigorous so that they give a clear view of the impact of new initiatives on the quality of provision.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' achievement is satisfactory. The standards they have attained when they enter the college in Year 7 vary annually but are usually above average. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average, being higher in mathematics and science than in English. This represents satisfactory progress. This rate of progress is maintained over Years 10 and 11 so that standards at the age of 16 remain above average.

Results for 2006 and inspection evidence shows that students are beginning to make more rapid progress over Years 7 to 11 and that standards in English are moving towards those in other subjects. In 2006 the college met its statutory targets for Mathematics and Science but not those for English at Key Stage 3. However the target of 64% for the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE was met. No group of students makes significantly better or worse progress than any other group. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities also make satisfactory progress.

Standards in the sixth form are broadly average. Numbers in the sixth form are too small to be able to make significant comparison between groups.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. Students' behaviour is good and managed effectively by staff. This is reflected in the low exclusion rates and low levels of disruptive behaviour. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good and is effectively promoted in most curriculum activities and morning assemblies. Students' awareness of different cultures and backgrounds has been raised through effective liaison with local community groups and colleges and is satisfactory. Students enjoy their time at the college and attendance is above the national average due to the low percentage of unauthorised absences. Good relationships exist between staff and students. Students show consideration and respect to one another and learn to take responsibility for their own actions.

Students feel safe, and effective policies and procedures ensure they know what to do if they are bullied or have a problem. Parents are positive about the degree to which they feel their child's safety is assured. The college effectively promotes healthy lifestyles through the healthy food options offered to students. Overall, students are positive about the more healthy food now available and the canteen is heavily subscribed. Students participate in the wide variety of very good sports activities on offer during the college day and many take part in extra-curricular sport and lunchtime clubs.

Older students make significant contributions to the college community by acting as 'peer mediators' to Year 7 students. Sixth form students work as millennium volunteers and provide assistance in organising activities for younger students to participate. The college council meets regularly to discuss issues relating to college life and has been fully involved in decisions relating to the improvements to the facilities offered by the college.

Students develop skills useful in their future lives, such as work related skills through work experience, vocational programmes and the development of key skills. Through its own audit, the college recognises that further progress needs to be made in the promotion of citizenship, which, although satisfactorily integrated into curriculum activities, is not covered in sufficient depth.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Throughout the college, teaching and students' learning are satisfactory overall. This agrees with the college's own evaluation. Although the consistency of the quality of the lessons observed is better than at the last inspection, the teaching and learning

still vary too much. In most lessons students have a clear understanding of what they have to learn. Lessons are generally well planned so the activities help students to learn, and behaviour is good. Teachers generally have good knowledge of their subject areas. In some of the better lessons, students are encouraged to take charge of their own learning. Students respond well to such opportunities and enjoy working this way. Teachers use computers well to display material to students. In some lessons, however, activities are not sufficiently matched to the needs of all students and as a result some students are less engaged than others in learning. Teachers and learning support assistants know the needs of students well and provide for them adequately. In less well planned lessons, teaching assistants are used to direct rather than to develop an individual student's understanding.

Some student work is unmarked. Teachers provide students with insufficient detailed information on the next steps to improve their work. Some teachers have much better information about the ongoing achievement of students in their classes than others, and so are much better placed to help individuals improve. The college is now spreading this good practice to all teachers.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The college provides a good curriculum for students in Years 7 to 11. There is a very impressive range of extra-curricular activities in which nearly every student participates. Many students play sports voluntarily, the arts contribute to the local community and students enjoy a wide range of visits, including trips abroad. An imaginative link with an inner-city college is being developed to give students contact with students from minority ethnic groups. The college is improving its personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme to provide a more systematic way of including citizenship within the curriculum.

Students are able to select from an appropriate range of GCSE and vocational courses, including sport and recreation, business administration, health and social care, and travel and tourism. Good provision is made for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. They are able to access courses more appropriate and relevant to their future needs so that they achieve as well as other students. The good quality programme of work experience is well appreciated by students and provides good opportunities for students to develop work-related skills.

The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is an adequate range of A-level courses and a small number of students follow vocational courses. Good links with other providers are used for the vocational courses and for subjects such as further mathematics.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Effective policies and procedures ensure compliance with child protection requirements. Incidents of bullying are few but where they do occur most students feel able to report incidents and are fully aware of procedures to follow should they have issues or problems in relation to safeguarding. The local youth service is based on site and provides further valuable support to students experiencing difficulties.

The college liaises with a wide range of internal and external support services to support the individual needs of students. There are good transition arrangements in place and very good links with local primary schools to ensure students receive appropriate support in relation to their educational and emotional needs. The college has recently reinstated the Behaviour Support Unit to provide additional support for those students whose difficulties mean that they make slower progress with their learning. Coping strategies, such as courses in anger management, have been designed to improve students' ability to engage in lessons, and have enabled them to do this through improved behaviour. Parents are fully involved in courses of action designed to support students. Students' needs are assessed and profiles are developed with useful information for teachers to base lesson planning and support. Staff have had some training in relation to particular disorders and learning difficulties, but the college recognises that this is an area for continuous development.

Targets for students are being more closely monitored and good initiatives are being developed to involve them more in evaluating their own progress and this has improved some students' progress, especially in English. The college has its own attached Connexions officer and students obtain good advice and guidance at each key stage about their future options and career choices.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The leadership and management of the college are satisfactory with some good and improving aspects. The headteacher, ably supported by a new senior leadership team, has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the college. The leadership team recognises areas for improvement in examination and test performance and is taking action to improve results, for example, in English.

The improvement and planning cycle is supported by clear guidance and comprehensive documentation but the action plans produced for subjects vary in quality and detail. It does, however, have the potential to consolidate and strengthen recent improvements. Monitoring systems are not yet robust enough to give the senior leaders a clear understanding of the impact of the changes that have been implemented



recently. A range of other self-evaluation procedures is being developed. Appropriate focus has been given to improving teaching and learning, which has resulted in better lesson planning. However, within lesson observations undertaken by the management team, there is insufficient analysis or focus on the learning taking place within lessons, and not enough evaluation of the overall impact of improved teaching methods on students' progress. The new teaching and learning policy is still in the early stages of implementation and its effect on the quality of provision is too early to judge. Arrangements for gathering parents' and students' views are satisfactory and the college is generally responsive to their main concerns. The college collaborates effectively with local colleges and is involved in a range of inventive and well supported community activities.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are managed well. The college has passed through a period of financial stringency but, owing to prudent financial management, it is now solvent and gives good value for money. The college has tackled the issues identified at the last inspection effectively and demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve further. Governance is satisfactory. The governors support the headteacher and are increasing their effectiveness in checking the college's progress.

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## Inspection judgements

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

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for talking to the inspectors who visited your college at the beginning of November. We were impressed by how well behaved and how helpful you were towards us. We also met with teachers and had many letters from parents. At the end of the inspection we concluded yours is a satisfactory college.

What is good about your college

- Your behaviour is good and most of you pay attention during lessons.
- Most of you make at least satisfactory progress, and there are signs that this is improving. You are now more involved in setting targets for achievement, which means you know what is expected of you to do well.
- Lessons are satisfactory; some are very good. Better lessons involve you more in the learning, and are planned well to keep your attention.
- Personal development and the care and support you receive at the college are good. The opportunities you have during college time and after college are very good and this shows in the high numbers of you taking part.
- The college is satisfactorily led and managed. Senior members of staff have the right ideas and are taking the right actions to improve things.

Improvements we would like the college to make

- Some lessons need to be improved so that all of you learn well and no one is left behind.
- Your work needs to be marked more regularly in some cases, and with more information, so that you can improve further.
- The ways of knowing how well all students are learning needs to be improved, so that more students make better than average progress.

Thank you again for your help with the inspection. We wish you every success in the future.