

Patchway Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109296
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	298253
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1089
6th form	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Howell
Headteacher	Alan Howson
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2000
School address	Hempton Lane Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4AJ
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Patchway Community College is a slightly larger-than-average comprehensive school that has reduced in size since the last inspection. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below that found in most schools. The number of students whose first language is not English is below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to that found in most schools. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The college is a training school for teachers and it has close links with the University of the West of England and other local universities. The college also has specialist business and enterprise status. The college acts as the lead school for the delivery of extended services within the local area.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Patchway Community College provides students with a satisfactory education with good features. The college is very inclusive and staff care for students well. As one parent commented, "I am very impressed with the level of care that is given to my daughter at PCC." The personal development of students is good and relationships between staff and students are positive. The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning and are prepared to rise to the challenges set for them in lessons. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the college is good and attendance is satisfactory and improving.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with lessons ranging from outstanding to inadequate. The college has put in place some good strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These are bearing fruit and the quality of teaching and the progress made by students is improving, although variation between different subjects still remains. Standards at the end of Year 9 are rising and in 2006 were close to national averages. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2006 were below the national average. However, students currently in Years 10 and 11 are attaining broadly average standards and they are now making satisfactory progress through the college.

The curriculum is good. Recent developments in Years 10 and 11 ensure that it is well matched to the needs and interests of students. The college has recently developed and improved its systems for monitoring students' progress. Any students that are showing signs of falling behind with their work are identified and supported. This newly improved system is having an impact on the progress made by students. All students are set suitably challenging academic targets. They know these targets and are generally aware of how well they are doing but they are not always clear about the steps they need to take to get from one grade or level to the next.

The college's status as a specialist business and enterprise college has brought many benefits; for example, through links with other schools and the business community, in enhanced resources and in the opportunities to develop students' teamwork, communication and enterprise skills.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher leads the college well. He is providing a clear sense of direction that is focused on raising achievement. Middle leaders share this vision. However, variation in the quality of teaching and students' progress between subjects indicates that they are not all equally effective in achieving this aim. The college has addressed the issues raised at the last inspection. Self-evaluation is good. The college is clear about areas in need of improvement and has good plans to address these issues. Recently developed systems to improve teaching and progress are more rigorous. They have already impacted on raising standards in Years 7 to 9 and are beginning to impact on Years 10 and 11. These systems provide the college with good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory, with examples of good practice when students are given more responsibility for their own learning. Students receive good advice on the appropriate courses to follow; as a consequence, few fail to successfully complete their studies. Guidance is equally good on the different progression paths available and a growing proportion is successfully seeking places in higher education. Sixth form students feel valued. They form an integral part of the college and take

on a wide range of responsibilities, such as providing extra curricular opportunities for younger students, acting as trained peer counsellors and representing student views on the governing body. Monitoring of teaching and student progress is now being completed more rigorously. These systems are having a positive impact on the standards reached by students. Standards are beginning to rise but remain below average, with students making satisfactory progress from a low starting point. The capacity for the sixth form to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in order to raise achievement.
- Ensure that every student is clear about what exactly needs to be done to improve their attainment grades or levels.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the college with levels of attainment that are broadly average. Standards at the end of Year 9 have been rising in recent years and in 2006 were just below the national average. The overall progress made by students between Years 7 and 9 has improved and is now satisfactory. However, there is variation in the progress made by students in different subjects. For example, progress in English is good, while in mathematics and science it is satisfactory.

In 2006 the standards in Year 11 as measured by the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades was below the national average. This in the main was due to the poor progress they made during Years 7 to 9. The progress they made during Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory in most subjects, although inadequate in mathematics. The college has identified the reasons behind the underachievement in mathematics and has taken effective steps to improve students' progress in this subject. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 made better progress in their earlier years at the college and so are now reaching higher standards. Lessons observations during this inspection and college tracking data indicate that standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Students are now making satisfactory progress through the college. All groups of students are making similar progress in their learning.

The level of attainment of students entering Year 12 is below that found in most sixth forms. Standards obtained in both academic and vocational examinations at the end of Years 12 and 13 are below the national average. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning, although there is variation in the progress made between different subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students establish and maintain good relationships with one another and with staff. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good. They particularly appreciate lessons that involve them actively in their learning. However, some low-level misbehaviour occurs when the work is not so involving. Students behave sensibly when moving around the college and at breaktimes. Students say they feel safe in college and they are aware of the need for safe practice when using specialist equipment in areas such as

science, design and technology and PE. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved following efforts the college has made to promote regular attendance and the importance of learning.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are aware of the needs of others, and many students take good advantage of the opportunities for visits and outings offered by the college. Students' contribution to the college and the community is good. They raise money for charities and support community projects well. The college council takes its role seriously and has been responsible for improvements that benefit their peers. Students' knowledge and adoption of healthy lifestyles is satisfactory. They know about the health advantages of activities such as healthy eating, walking or cycling to college and being involved in sport. A reasonable proportion of students adopt these practices. The college prepares students well for the world of work through the range of business and enterprise opportunities provided through the curriculum and its links with the local business community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and improving. Most teachers plan lessons well and some use a variety of teaching and learning styles. Learning objectives are shared with students and are clearly outlined at the front of the room to focus the learning. Students with special educational needs are supported effectively and develop a range of knowledge and skills.

In the best lessons, tasks are varied and there is an undercurrent of enjoyment and fun. Students are given ample opportunity to take part in practical activities. Discussions at the start and end of lessons maximise students' progress by identifying whether or not they are falling behind and what they must do to catch up. Well-ordered class management allows structured learning to take place. However, some lessons do not contain interesting activities that engage all students and some also lack pace and challenge. Students respond but do not show enthusiasm for their learning in these lessons. Occasionally students misbehave when they do not value the work they are asked to complete.

The quality of marking and feedback varies. In some lessons, meticulous marking and organisation enhances students' progress. Exercises are graded against National Curriculum levels and comments tell students clearly how they have performed and what they must do to get better. This good practice is not, however, consistent across the college and, as a consequence, students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. At Key Stage 3 the provision is broad and well balanced, meeting all statutory requirements. The 14–19 curriculum has recently been developed to better meet the needs and aspirations of all groups of students. At present, added to the GCSE and A-level courses is an imaginative range of vocational subjects. Those who would struggle to follow a full, traditional school-based curriculum are successfully catered for through individually tailored programmes that meet their needs. In the sixth form the subject choice has been further

enhanced by a well-managed collaborative arrangement. However, many courses suffer from low numbers of students, so restricting the opportunities for academic interaction and stimulation. The college's business specialism permeates the whole curriculum through specific courses, business days and enhanced links with the local community.

The college promotes a wide range of enrichment activities ranging across the whole curriculum, many of which are timetabled on Wednesday afternoon when the college closes early. Nevertheless, while the number of students participating is rising, too few take up these opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The care the college takes over the needs of vulnerable children and those with learning or behavioural difficulties is very good. The college provides a caring and inclusive environment, in which students feel safe and confident that they have someone to talk to, for example, in lunchtime drop-in centres. Good links have been developed with local primary schools and these provide for a good transition between schools. Subject information and careers guidance are good, and are effective in enabling students to make study choices that match their abilities and preferences. Appropriate and effective systems are in place to ensure students' safety. Procedures for child protection are robust.

The procedures for monitoring students' academic progress have recently been developed and improved. These systems now more robustly identify students who are underperforming and appropriate support is provided. These new systems are beginning to have a positive impact on students' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since his appointment in 2004, the headteacher has instigated a number of changes aimed at raising standards. Senior managers have set a clear direction for the college. They understand the college's strengths and weaknesses and are committed to securing improvement. The high rate of staff turnover has declined and more consistent approaches to teaching and learning have been introduced. Well-planned systems of self-evaluation and for monitoring students' progress have been implemented. The impact of these is being seen in improved attainment and achievement in several sections of the school. As a result of the new systems, improvements are set to accelerate.

Staff say that the management team is approachable and very supportive. Professional development activities are closely linked to performance targets and enable staff to develop skills that will benefit both them and the college as a whole. Governors are supportive of the college, are involved in developing its strategic direction and provide a satisfactory level of challenge to the leadership team. Middle leaders share the senior management team's vision for school improvement and are committed to working with their teams to raise standards. Variation in students' achievement between subjects, however, at all three key stages, indicates that not all subject areas are equally successful at this. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching

and use of assessment data to improve student learning still exist between different departments in the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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
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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	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	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
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

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	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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	3
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	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2	
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	3	
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 very much to all of you who spoke to us and answered our questions during the recent inspection of your school. We very much appreciate the help that you gave us. Now that we have finished the inspection I am writing to tell you of our findings.

We thought your school looks after you well, gives you a sound education and is improving. The following points are what we found to be the school's key strengths and weaknesses:

- Your headteacher leads the school well. He wants the very best for all of you and he has good plans to make the school even better.
- You show good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Your relationships with each other and with teachers are good.
- Staff in the school take good care of you and make sure you feel safe.
- You have a good range of both academic and vocational courses to choose from in Years 10 and 11.
- The school provides you with a good range of clubs and activities outside of normal schools hours. However, it would be nice to see more of you participating in these activities.
- The business days and other business and enterprise activities provided by the school help you develop good skills, attitudes and knowledge in preparation for working life.

In order to improve further we have also asked the school to do the following:

- Many of your lessons contain interesting activities, are pitched at the right level for you and no time is wasted. This helps you learn well. We have asked the school to ensure that more of your lessons are like this.
- Ensure that you are all clear about exactly how to improve your grades or levels; you should be able to explain what you need to do in each subject to get better results, apart from revising harder.

Thank you again and I wish you all good luck for the future.