

Whitby Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121667
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	299781
Inspection dates	28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Sara Morrissey HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	919
6th form	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss J Kenyon
Headteacher	Ms R Totton
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2005
School address	Prospect Hill Whitby North Yorkshire YO21 1LA
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Age group	14–19
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Introduction

The college was last inspected in October 2005, when it was judged to require special measures. This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Whitby Community College is an average sized specialist technology college for 14 to 19 year olds that is served by two middle schools. Students attend the college from a wide geographical area and from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. A high proportion of students continue their studies in the sixth form. Very few students speak English as an additional language and most are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to other schools. Since 2005 the college has been part of a group of schools providing a range of additional services to pupils, parents and the wider community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Whitby Community College has improved and, as a result of better teaching and learning, standards are rising. However, a legacy of past weaknesses means that not all students achieve as well as they should and overall achievement remains inadequate. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this college requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The college is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement. The college provides inadequate value for money.

The headteacher has implemented appropriate strategies to bring about considerable improvement since the last inspection. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of their roles in managing specific actions. Middle leaders have been empowered to take responsibility for their areas of learning and have contributed significantly to improving the quality of teaching and learning which is satisfactory and improving. Students feel safe and well supported. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved because they understand better what is expected of them. Many feel motivated by the rewards policy which focuses more on their achievements. Students enjoy lessons more where there are a range of activities that actively engage them in their learning and provide them with challenge as well as support. However, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always receive the necessary guidance so that they do not all achieve as well as they should. In addition, the wealth of data available to teachers are not always used well enough to identify and tackle remaining pockets of underachievement.

Partnerships with parents have improved and the college has taken appropriate steps to increase links with the feeder schools. Specialist status has made a positive contribution to community links.

School self-evaluation is generally accurate and helps to inform planning. Governors hold the school to account rigorously. However, a strategic and cohesive overview plan for future improvement has not been fully established. As a result of additional support provided by a seconded deputy headteacher, progress has accelerated but the senior leadership skills required to maintain the pace of improvement are not fully embedded. The headteacher has worked hard to establish an ethos for improvement and build teams of staff to implement necessary changes to tackle identified priorities. This has increased the capacity for further improvement, which is satisfactory overall.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Standards in the sixth form match broadly the national average. In 2006, unvalidated results indicate significant improvement and students achieved well. Under the good leadership of the head of post-16 education, a legacy of underachievement has been effectively tackled and progress has accelerated as the quality of teaching has improved. Targets are shared and progress is reviewed formally on a regular basis. Students in the sixth form benefit from a broad range of A and AS level subjects with satisfactory vocational opportunities. However, there is little enrichment of the curriculum beyond students' major subjects and this represents a missed opportunity to enhance students' personal development. Good care, guidance and support

enable most students to gain maturity and confidence. Expectations are high and a good proportion of students' progress onto courses in higher education or into employment on leaving the college. Progression routes from Key Stage 4 to post-16 courses are now being strengthened in order to raise achievement further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement, particularly for those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Use data more precisely to identify and tackle variations in achievement and standards between subjects and different groups of learners.
- Improve the proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better.
- Embed and improve senior leadership skills further to secure a strategic and cohesive plan for sustainable college improvement in the future.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards and achievement have improved since the last inspection. GCSE results broadly match the national average. However, students arrive in Year 10 with standards that are above average so they are not all doing as well as might be expected and their overall achievement remains inadequate. Improved monitoring of students' progress, careful mentoring of those who are under-achieving and a stronger emphasis on successful completion of coursework has increased the rate of progress made by the current Year 11 group. Closer involvement of parents is proving particularly beneficial for some students. However, although many Year 11 pupils are now making satisfactory progress, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have less severe needs and so do not have statements, do not achieve as well as they should. There is also too much variation in achievement of all students across different subject areas and 'pockets' of under-achievement persist.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Students' behaviour has improved significantly and is satisfactory overall. This is due, in part, to better teaching that meets the learning needs of students and, most notably, engages them in their learning. Most students listen carefully to the teacher, work well together and focus on their work so that they make better progress. In addition, senior staff are much more visible around the school, monitoring the way in which students conduct themselves. Teachers are more confident when challenging unacceptable behaviour and most implement, consistently, the clear and agreed codes of conduct. The recent focus on rewarding good attitudes and individual achievement has motivated students and improved their attitudes to learning.

Students generally feel safe in school. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and generally dealt with effectively by staff. However, occasionally pupils feel that they are not always taken seriously and are dissatisfied with the outcome. Many students are developing a sense of belonging and pride in their school. The school council gives students the opportunity to make

a valuable contribution to the school community. However, some students are unaware of its role or achievements. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Work experience helps to prepare students well for life after school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. Teachers are now, as one teacher put it, 'talking teaching and learning'. They are keen to improve their teaching techniques, to try new strategies and to enable students to learn as quickly as possible. In particular, teachers are striving to put into practice the school's emphasis on checking what students understand and using the findings to overcome weaknesses and raise standards. Teachers plan lessons carefully, tell pupils what they are expected to learn in the lesson and try to provide interesting activities to gain students' interest and hold their concentration. Where these efforts are successful, pupils are cooperative, work conscientiously and make good progress. Teachers' marking is generally good and provides useful advice on how the work might be improved.

Too many lessons, however, are satisfactory rather than good. Teaching is generally secure but not particularly exciting. Students easily lose interest, don't listen carefully enough and don't make as much effort as they could when working on the various tasks. As a result they do not make the progress that they might. Where students have had several changes of teacher in a subject, their attitudes to learning are often weak and they are difficult to motivate, even for teachers with good skills and strategies.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets most students' needs. However, the arrangements for those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not sufficiently secure. The curriculum contains all the required subjects and has a satisfactory range of vocational courses. The personalised learning programme offers a suitable curriculum for those for whom a full programme of GCSE subjects is inappropriate. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, though students comment that this has diminished since the previous inspection because of teachers' need to concentrate their energies on raising standards within the curriculum. The school has used its technology college status to enhance the use of information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum and students benefit from the additional variety in learning activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Child protection procedures are in place. Students are well supported and the behaviour management team works effectively with those students who experience problems. Students appreciate the positive working relationships

that they have with staff. Good links exist with external agencies. Students receive effective careers guidance as expected of an establishment that holds the Careers Guidance Quality Mark. They have access to guidance relating to sex education, drugs, alcohol and tobacco abuse, which supports their personal development and well-being.

Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory. Until recently, the teaching and progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in lessons has not been effectively monitored. Links between those responsible for learning difficulties and/or disabilities provision and the Behaviour Management Team have not been strong enough. The school has recognised this and taken steps to review the progress made by individual students through regular review meetings and to develop a closer working relationship between key staff. Gifted and talented students have been identified and extension work is provided in lessons and in voluntary master classes after school. However, they are not always sufficiently challenged. Tracking systems are in place to monitor students' progress towards predicted targets. Most students can explain what they must do to improve and speak positively of the progress that they have made. However, while target setting and the use of assessment during lessons has improved, it is not fully embedded within and across departments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management have improved and are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has clarified the responsibilities of senior leaders so that they are better able to fulfil their roles. She has managed effectively the implementation of a range of strategies to tackle areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. The associate deputy headteacher, seconded to the college for one year, has also had a positive impact on building the capacity of the senior team. Consequently, there have been significant improvements in behaviour management and the quality of teaching, supported by accurate monitoring and evaluation. These improvements have been enhanced by external support, including that from the local authority (LA). However, although senior management skills have improved, leadership skills are not fully developed or embedded to ensure that actions are sustainable. Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility. The headteacher has not yet secured a fully shared, cohesive and long-term strategic plan for the college's future with a sharp enough focus on raising achievement. Leadership of the specialist college lacks clarity. Although there have been improvements, their impact on students' achievement is unclear.

Middle leaders have grown in confidence: most have a good understanding of what is expected of them and are held to account appropriately. They have valued the focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and have been empowered to fulfil their roles more effectively through a combination of the college's professional development programme, regular meetings to share good practice and targeted LA support. They know the strengths and weaknesses in their area but the outcomes of department evaluations have not been incorporated fully into strategic planning by senior leaders.

The college runs smoothly on a day to day basis because agreed procedures are consistently followed by the great majority of staff. The restructured governing body has re-established links with different areas of the college to raise governors' understanding of its work. They

have a more accurate understanding of the progress made by the college and hold senior leaders to account.

The headteacher has worked hard to establish an ethos for learning and is a more visible presence in the college. A positive team approach amongst most staff has developed and a strong determination exists to tackle the remaining priorities for action. Satisfactory capacity exists for further improvement.

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?	4	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	4	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	

Personal development and well-being

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

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?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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	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	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	4	
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?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us during our recent visit to your college. We appreciated your welcome and the time so many of you took to talk to us about your work and life in general at Whitby Community College. Many of you will know that inspectors have been visiting your college each term for over a year and I am pleased to tell you that many aspects of the college have improved.

Ms Totton and the staff at Whitby have worked hard to tackle the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. As a result, more of you make the progress that might be expected of you given your previous achievements. This is because teaching has improved and you enjoy your lessons more often. Some of you told us how you appreciate the efforts of your teachers to vary activities and make learning more interesting. You also told us that you value the way in which teachers reward your efforts and achievements more often. Achievements of students in the sixth form have improved significantly because of good teaching and the support and guidance that you receive during Years 12 and 13. The tutor intervention support programme has been particularly good at targeting problem areas for individual students and providing some extra support.

Of course, there are still some improvements that need to be made. Although test and examination results have risen, they are not high enough, particularly for those students who find learning difficult. Groups of students also make better progress in some subjects than in others and the college knows that there is further work to do to make sure that all students achieve as well as they can in all subject areas. You can play a big part in making this happen by attending school regularly, following the agreed codes for behaviour and using your time well in lessons to help you achieve your full potential and to prepare you well for the future.