

# Mark Rutherford Upper School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109674
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	302535
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
Community College	1030
6th form	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Phillip Russell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Steve Peacey
<b>Date of previous community College inspection</b>	22 February 2006
<b>Community College address</b>	Wentworth Drive Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 8PX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 290200
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the community College

Mark Rutherford Upper School and Community College is a larger than average school which serves a mixed catchment area in the North of Bedford. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of educational need, is in line with the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly higher than usual. The attainment of students entering the school is in line with national benchmarks. The school has been awarded Arts Mark Gold, Investors in People and the Football Charter Standard, and in 2007 it achieved Healthy School status. In February 2005 the school was placed in special measures.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the community College

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and is providing a satisfactory standard of education. Standards and achievement have improved significantly and students now reach the national average in their GCSE results. The school has identified groups of students who are in danger of underachievement and is working hard to raise achievement across the board beyond its current satisfactory level.

The good leadership of the new senior management team has transformed the ethos of the school and is developing a positive learning environment for all. The school is a caring and inclusive community where students receive a wide range of support. Behaviour and attendance have improved greatly. Students are friendly and welcoming and their personal development is good. They are eager to say how much the school has improved and that they enjoy being there. They appreciate and take advantage of the good range of extra-curricular opportunities provided for them, with many taking part in a recent, highly successful musical production. Although students' social development is good, their moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory because of a lack of high quality provision for religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. Apart from this aspect, the curriculum meets the needs of the students well and many new courses have been introduced which have had a positive impact on achievement. The school council and the house system ensure that students make a positive contribution to both the school and the wider community. The school council was instrumental in the school achieving the Healthy School status and in appointing the current head teacher. Students understand what is meant by a healthy lifestyle but only a quarter take the healthy school lunch or participate in regular physical activity, except for their physical education lesson. Students are well prepared for future study or employment.

Teaching is satisfactory across the school, although a small proportion of lessons, not usually taken by permanent staff, are still inadequate because of continuing recruitment difficulties. Teaching and learning are monitored consistently across the school and support and coaching given where weaker teaching is seen. Tailored, professional development opportunities have contributed to improvement including the sharing of the best practice. Heads of department have become more analytical and pro-active in their use of data to track progress. Students are all set targets and they know what they mean. However, they are still often unsure about exactly what it is they have to do to reach their targets.

The school's self-evaluation clearly indicates that its headteacher, governors and senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths as well as what the school needs to do in order to improve. The capacity for the school to improve further is good.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory, with some good features, particularly in the personal development of the students. Standards on advanced courses are average overall with some subjects performing well in 2007, particularly the BTEC National in Sports Science. Students are sociable and cooperative, get on very well with each other and their teachers and appreciate the support from and access to staff to help them with their studies.

The curriculum overall is good with a full range of A levels and a growing range of one and two year vocational courses offered. However, the benefits of providing flexibility in their choice of options does mean that some sets and some courses have low numbers that limit classroom interaction and activities. Care, guidance and support given for students in the sixth form are good, particularly in giving advice on future career and education opportunities. However, arrangements for monitoring their academic progress and providing robust and effective intervention strategies to tackle potential underachievement are not yet fully developed.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory with an appropriate action plan in place to tackle some of the key issues affecting standards and achievement. Measures to improve attendance and punctuality to school and lessons are proving effective.

### **What the community College should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement from satisfactory to good, by providing greater consistency in teaching and learning across all groups of students and subjects
- Ensure all students know exactly what they have to do in order to improve their work
- Improve provision for religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement has improved and is now satisfactory and standards overall are average. The outcomes of the 2007 national tests for students aged 14 in mathematics are above national average, and for science are broadly in line with the national average. This meets the school's own targets and continues the upward trend in standards in these subjects. Results in English for these students are, however, below the national average.

The results of the 2007 GCSE examinations show steady improvement. Fifty nine per cent of students obtained five higher-grade GCSE passes, matching the national average and exceeding the school target. There was a slightly better performance when considering those obtaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, the result was above the national average. Impressive GCSE results were obtained in mathematics, drama, music and home economics, but results in a relatively small number of other subjects were disappointing.

The school has put in place robust procedures for monitoring and identifying students likely to underachieve and enacted a number of effective initiatives to support students' learning. As a result, the majority now make satisfactory progress and some make good progress. However, there is still some relative underachievement among specific groups of students, including some girls and some minority ethnic groups. The mathematics department has led the way in developing stimulating and effective teaching strategies as examples of good practice to raise achievement among all groups of students. The challenge for the school is to disseminate this and other areas of good practice to improve standards and achievement further in all subjects and for all groups of pupils.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' self-esteem, confidence and trust in staff has been significantly raised over the past year. Their behaviour is good. On the few occasions when poor behaviour occurs, it is generally managed effectively. Exclusions, both fixed term and permanent, have dramatically reduced and are now at acceptable levels. Attendance has also improved significantly and is now only slightly below the national average.

Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. However, student's social development is good. This is clearly exemplified by the way students with additional difficulties are being integrated into all aspects of school life and the way that they are supported by their peers. Students understand the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle and can explain how to attain this. The school makes a good contribution to students' future economic well-being through the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and the work related programme and vocational opportunities. Students feel safe in school and have good regard for health and safety. This is because good attention to safe practice features heavily in practical lessons.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A few pockets of unsatisfactory teaching remain which undermine students' progress, but the school is taking robust action to deal with this situation. There are examples of excellent practice, for example, in a Sixth Form music technology lesson where the teacher's inspirational delivery enthused and challenged students and consequently they made outstanding progress.

Teachers plan their lessons well with clear learning objectives, which they share effectively with students. Teachers manage behaviour well and establish good relationships with their students. In response, students have positive attitudes towards their learning and generally apply themselves well. In most lessons, teachers build effectively on what students understand, know and can do, which enables them to make satisfactory progress. Although less able students make satisfactory progress, some lessons are not always structured sufficiently well to meet their needs. Most students know the grades and levels at which they are working, but too few know what they have to do to improve. This is partly because the quality of marking remains inconsistent.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Curriculum provision is more flexible than at the time of the last inspection. The needs of individual students are better met. In Year 9, a range of strategies, such as smaller teaching groups, has been introduced in response to students identified as underachieving. In Years 10

and 11 personalised programmes, comprising GCSE, vocational and link courses with colleges meet the aspirations and interests of almost all students. Continuity of provision from 14-19 is good.

Provision for students' personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education needs improvement. Students say there are many missed opportunities. There is too little curriculum time to cover the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education to the depth required.

Throughout the school, students enjoy many opportunities provided by a range of extra-curricular activities including drama, music, and sport. Apart from several choirs and bands, forty-eight students took part in a very successful music tour to the South of France. Activities week in the summer term offers a diversity of experiences on and off the school site.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school is a caring community that has the welfare, health and safety of its students at its heart. Students say that they feel safe, secure and free from harassment. Child protection, staff vetting and health and safety procedures are all very thorough and robust. Learners at risk are identified promptly and there is an extensive range of effective support arrangements in place. Students say that problems are dealt with swiftly and in a very understanding way. They know who to turn to if they do have a concern. Many staff operate an 'Open Door' policy to enable students with difficulties to seek advice and support easily. However, the school recognises that aspects of support for students with learning difficulties is still developing and needs to be more focussed. The use of data for identifying underachievement has improved, and students are aware of the academic targets that they are working towards. The school works well with parents and it works very well with an extensive range of outside agencies. There is a whole school commitment to treating and caring for every student as an individual.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The new headteacher has lost no time in establishing a more focused culture and ethos for the school. In a short space of time, he has built an effective senior management team, which has brought about good improvement in several key areas. The work of the school is now closely monitored and staff are held to account for their performance. The governing body is becoming much more involved with the life of the school, and is developing the knowledge and confidence to challenge and participate in deciding strategy. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The budget remains a concern because of on-going staffing issues. However, there is now a new finance officer in post and a licensed deficit has been agreed with the Local Authority.

The new line management structure is working well and line managers have identified weaker teaching and put in place a range of strategies to remedy the situation. The school has been innovative and creative in striving to overcome staff recruitment difficulties. Middle managers are being developed, with well-targeted support from the Local Authority, to take responsibility for teaching and results in their departments. These measures have brought about an overall

improvement in the quality of teaching and have had a positive impact on achievement and standards. Although there is still some way to go, and there is no room for complacency, the school now has a platform from which to move onwards and upwards, and is actively planning for the future.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	Community College 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the community College work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	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?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the community College's self-evaluation	2	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	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 community College require special measures?	No	
Does this community College require a notice to improve?	No	

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

30 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Mark Rutherford Upper School and Community College, Bedford, MK41 8PX

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 28-29 November. The inspectors enjoyed talking with you and seeing you at work. You were mature and courteous in the way you spoke with each of us.

Your school is now a satisfactory and improving school; it no longer requires Special Measures. You make satisfactory progress by the time you leave school, and your results in examinations have gone up. Teaching has improved and is now mainly satisfactory. There are many good and even some outstanding lessons. New courses have been introduced and you have appreciated the chance to study new subjects. The guidance and support you receive are good, and you respond with positive attitudes towards each other and to your work. We were particularly impressed with your positive attitudes towards learning and the way your behaviour and attendance have improved. Your social development is good and you show respect and consideration to those who are different to yourselves. Your moral, spiritual and cultural development is only satisfactory because we think that provision for religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship could be better. Staff are working hard to track your progress and make sure you all do well. The school is well led by the headteacher and senior team and there is a good team spirit among the staff and governors, who all want you all to do your very best

We have asked your school, with your help, to raise the achievement of those, across the school, who do not do as well others at the moment. You all know what your target grades are, but we have asked your teachers to give you more help in understanding exactly what it is you have to do to reach your targets.

The headteacher, teachers, governors and staff are highly committed to their work and know that your school has the potential to do even better. We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector