

# Sir Harry Smith Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110870
<b>Local Authority</b>	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310446
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Alder HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
Community College	1024
6th form	103
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Elaine Hedgecock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Laurie Richards
<b>Date of previous community College inspection</b>	17 January 2005
<b>Community College address</b>	Eastrea Road Whittlesey Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE7 1XB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01733 703991
<b>Fax number</b>	01733 703992

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, students' personal development and the school's care, guidance and support for them, the impact of the school's specialism, and why the school is successful. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, scrutiny of students' work, analysis of students' performance data, and interviews with students, the school's leaders and managers and the chair of governors.

## Description of the community College

The school is a specialist school for science and is situated in the town of Whittlesey, about six miles east of Peterborough. The proportion of students who are eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. There is also a lower proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, though there is a slightly higher proportion than nationally who have statements of special educational need. There are few students from minority ethnic groups. The school shares some of its sixth form teaching with a school in a neighbouring local authority.

The principal left to take up another post in summer 2007. An acting principal leads the school currently. He is supported by other senior leaders who are in acting positions, and by an experienced associate headteacher. A new principal has been appointed who will take up his role during the summer term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the community College

### Grade: 2

Sir Harry Smith Community College is a good school that students enjoy greatly. Parents are very positive about its work, with a good number of favourable comments made about the progress their children make because of good teaching and the care that is taken over the transition from primary school.

By the time students join the school in Year 7, the standards they have reached are broadly average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, they achieve good standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The standards they achieve in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are also good. Students therefore make good progress, including those with learning difficulties, and no group of students makes less than satisfactory progress. In the sixth form, standards are satisfactory with students making satisfactory progress in the great majority of their subjects.

Students make good progress because they are taught well; they have very good attitudes to learning, behaviour in lessons is often exemplary; attendance and punctuality are good. In addition a close watch is kept on how well students are progressing in their work and effective actions are taken to support those who are falling behind. These benefits are the result of the strong commitment of the staff and governing body to ensuring that students prosper.

Students' personal development is good. This is supported by extensive extra-curricular provision that is well attended and much appreciated by students and their parents. This contributes well to their social development. It helps them to become confident about speaking to adults, and they develop good relationships with their teachers and with each other. Behaviour around the school is good. The rate of exclusions is reasonably low, and there have been no permanent exclusions for five years. Although some bullying occurs, it is usually dealt with effectively. There is good support provided for those who have suffered it. Some incidents of racist name calling have occurred. These have been effectively dealt with and students feel that racism is kept to a minimum. Most are offended by racist comments. Students say that they feel safe. The school has taken steps to try to improve students' healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged, to good effect, to eat healthily and to take part in additional sporting activities. Many students also contribute well to the community, both in school through the 'buddy system' whereby older students support younger ones, and also through extensive fund-raising for charities and engaging with anti-litter campaigns. Students' views are listened to and acted upon. They have a good awareness of the dangers of alcohol and drugs, helped by the personal education programme. The extent of multi-cultural education is somewhat limited. Students' skills for their future economic well-being are well developed because they make good progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and there is a period of work experience for all, including those in the sixth form.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and reasonably engaging. Although in some lessons there is too much 'teacher talk', students maintain their interest. There is some good use of questioning by teachers, in particular some searching questions are asked. These are used well to recap what has been already taught. Questions are used less effectively to check the extent of understanding and to modify teaching where students' understanding proves to be limited. Marking is generally good and students are well-informed as to what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is good. Statutory requirements are met in the main school, but the teaching of religious education in the sixth form is irregular. There are opportunities for the more able to be challenged, for example through the option of studying two modern foreign languages and a GCSE in statistics. Some students also take the three separate sciences, but there is not sufficient time in the school day for this. As a result some 'twilight' time is needed, which deters some students. Those whose interests and aspirations lie outside academic study are satisfactorily catered for through vocational courses. Some of these courses are strongly work-related but their number is small. A good programme for personal development exists. Some tutors use morning registration time very well as a vehicle for this. But in other class registrations the time is not used as effectively.

Students are well cared for. Arrangements for those who join the school in Year 7 are good, a point made by several parents. The school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding children. Matters of health and safety are managed well. The recording of any incidents which require medical attention is exemplary. The school's leaders respond effectively to any concerns about safety. Vulnerable students are supported well and there is a safe environment for them. There is a thorough system for checking whether students are falling behind in their work or not. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well cared for. Their academic development has, as a result of changes in approach, received greater emphasis recently and there are also recent improvements in the monitoring of their progress. Provision for them is good, especially in Years 7 to 9.

The school's leaders, including the governing body, have a clear view about how the school should develop in the medium to long term. Policies and practices are evaluated and there is good evidence of a strengthening in provision as a result. The school's capacity to improve is good. There is a clear and strong commitment to raising achievement and to continue to provide a safe environment where students enjoy learning and develop well as individuals. The extent of monitoring, to check for example that lessons are of good quality and that students' work is showing progress, is admirably frequent and is effective. The professional development of teachers is well thought through and there is good evidence that the school is successful in improving the quality of teaching. Subject leaders now formally evaluate the work of their departments. A good start has been made on this, but the quality is inconsistent. While some important areas for improvement have been identified, the evaluations are not all yet sufficiently rigorous and detailed. In some they also tend to err on the side of generosity. The improvement plans which result from them are not generally clear enough about the extent of improvement which is being aimed for. The management of subject leaders by senior leaders is good, however. They meet with senior leaders regularly and reasonably frequently and report that they find the meetings both supportive and challenging. However, not all the senior leaders minute these discussions. This means that it is difficult for the acting principal to monitor their quality.

Governors undertake regular visits; some governors observe lessons. They know the school well and hold its leaders to account. They are a powerful group and have set a clear direction for the strategic development of the school. They are generally admirably thorough in their work, but they do not know enough about the impact of their policies on minority ethnic groups because they do not analyse data such as attendance and exclusions by pupil group.

The school's specialist status has had a good effect on improving standards in mathematics and ICT, and a satisfactory effect in science. The quality of students' learning has been enhanced by the use of interactive whiteboards. These have been trialled by the science department, which has provided training for other staff. Good links with the community have been established, including work with local primary schools and with special schools across the county.

The majority of the specialist school targets have been achieved, both for students' achievement and the uptake of courses in the sixth form. The overall effectiveness of specialist status has been good.

### **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 3**

Students' progress, and the standards they achieve, are satisfactory. Their enjoyment of school is outstanding. Teaching is good but it does not enable students to develop sufficiently as confident independent learners. This limits the progress they make. Their personal development is good; for example, their behaviour is very mature. They take good opportunities to contribute to the school community. When students travel to the partner school for lessons, their attendance is carefully recorded and electronically transferred to their own school. This represents a good degree of care.

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

- Improve the achievement and standards of students in the sixth form, for example by ensuring that they are more adept at working independently.
- Increase further the range of courses available for students in Years 10 and 11 whose interests and aspirations are less academic.
- Increase the rigour of self-evaluation in some subject departments to ensure that areas identified for improvement are well judged.

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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?	2	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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?	2	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	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	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

22 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Harry Smith Community College, Whittlesey, PE7 1XB

Dear Students,

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school recently. We talked with many of you and were very impressed by your confidence, openness and your very clear enjoyment of your school.

We found that your school is good. Its leaders work hard to make it good. They make sure that you are well taught and that there are a good number of extra curricular activities for you, as well as opportunities to make a contribution to the community. Your behaviour in lessons is good, you show interest and are keen to get involved. Your attendance is good too. All of this, and the fact that the teaching you receive is good and the way the school's leaders keep a close eye on whether you are making the progress you should, means that you learn well.

There are a small number of ways we have suggested that your school can get better still. We think that those of you who are in the sixth form could make better progress if you were helped to develop your independent learning skills. Although there are courses for those of you in Years 10 and 11 who prefer a less academic approach, we are suggesting that the number of these courses should be increased. Finally we are suggesting that in some subjects there should be a more thorough review of how your learning could be developed further.

You can help your school to develop further. Through the school council and student voice you can make suggestions which will be listened to.

Best wishes for your future

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector