

Thomas Knyvett College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125272
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	318033
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley 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.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	640
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Dr Gladys Spedding board
Headteacher	Mrs Rhona Barnfield, Executive HT Mrs Nicola Aboud, HT
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
School address	Stanwell Road Ashford TW15 3DU
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Age group	11-16
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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

Thomas Knyvett College is a small secondary school. The community it serves is located within an area of social deprivation and the school experiences a relatively high degree of mobility. Most of the students who attend are white. Approximately four percent speak English as an additional language and these pupils are from various ethnic groups. One quarter of pupils on roll have learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is above the national average. Few pupils have statements of special educational need.

Thomas Knyvett College was renamed from 1 September 2007. The School was previously known as the Ash Technology College and following its inspection in May 2007, federation arrangements between the Howard of Effingham School and Thomas Knyvett College were set in place. As a result, an immediate change in the leadership of the school was secured through the appointment of an executive headteacher and the appointment of a head of school. Other new appointments were also made in order to increase the school's capacity, most notably within the science department.

When Thomas Knyvett College was inspected as the Ash Technology College in May 2007 it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's inspectors of Schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school to monitor its progress. Given the good progress made and the school's increased capacity to improve, Thomas Knyvett College was then inspected in November 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures. This is because the college has secured much needed improvement under the outstanding leadership of both the executive headteacher and head of school. As a result, the school's provision has improved and students' learning is better. However, the impact of the college's work is yet to be seen fully in terms of students' achievement. The college is therefore given a Notice to Improve. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement at Key Stage 4.

Thomas Knyvett College has made good progress since the last inspection. A key factor in its success is the federation with a local school and the newly established leadership of the college. Together the executive headteacher and head of school have enabled the senior leadership team to fulfil their individual and collective roles well, and, as a result, the leadership and management of the college have been strengthened. The Interim Executive Board keeps a good overview of the college's development and is effective in holding the college to account. Leadership and management are now good. Good support and training, particularly in the use of assessment for learning, have contributed well to developments in teaching and learning. Consequently teachers are developing in confidence and lessons have improved; teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall. As a result, the majority of students make better progress in lessons than they did. However, standards overall are below average and underachievement at Key Stage 4 remains as a legacy from the past. As a result, more work is needed to increase the proportion of lessons in which students make good progress so that standards rise at a quicker pace.

The new leadership team has turned its attention to the curriculum in order to meet students' needs more effectively. A number of new vocational courses have been introduced and these are supported very well through the effective partnerships that are in place with other schools and providers. Students, particularly in Year 10, appreciate the wider variety of courses on offer. Of most significance, however, is the very good progress made in the provision for science. Resources for its delivery are very much better than they were and improved teaching means that pupils are now keen to learn. Older pupils speak of the major change in a short time and some are now inspired to continue their studies in science related subjects when they leave the college.

The pastoral care provided for students is strong and contributes significantly to the improved care, guidance and support that students receive. This is now good overall. As a result of the well focussed and effective work by leaders in the college, improvements have been seen in students' behaviour which is now satisfactory. Attendance has also improved and college data shows that it is close to the national average. These improvements contribute well to students' personal development which is satisfactory overall. Improvements made in the college's effectiveness have resulted in encouraging feedback from parents and in increased parental support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all students achieve as well as they can, particularly in Key Stage 4, and so raise standards.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and ensure that students make consistently good progress in lessons so their achievement is improved at a faster pace.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The attainment of students when they start at the college has changed over recent years. Year 11 students in 2006 and 2007 entered college with standards that were close to the national average. However, younger students in Years 7 to 9 entered the college with standards below the national average. As a result, when looking at the results of tests and examinations that students take in Years 9 and 11, a different picture of their achievement emerges. For example, in 2006, the results of the Key Stage 3 tests showed that students achieved well, particularly in English. However, standards were low in science and students underachieved. The unvalidated data for 2007 shows a similar picture.

For students in Year 11 in 2006, standards attained at GCSE were below the national average with 38% of students gaining 5A*-C grades. The unvalidated results for 2007 show that standards at GCSE have improved although they are still below the national average. The unvalidated data indicates the strongest performance in 2007 was in mathematics, art, drama and food technology with low standards evident in science. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve satisfactorily and, in most cases, better than other students across most subjects. Nonetheless, the results for Year 11 students represent inadequate achievement from when they joined the college in Year 7. However, there is a trend of improvement seen at GCSE and predictions for the current Year 11 would support an expected rise in standards. This reflects improvements made in teaching which are beginning to make a positive impact on students' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal outcomes of students are satisfactory overall with good features, notably in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This is as a result of the college's much improved provision and support. Students have a very clear understanding of how they are expected to behave and are aware of the rights of others. During the inspection, their good awareness of the importance of respecting each other was demonstrated in a Year 8 drama lesson. Students have responded well to the very good support systems in place to help them improve their behaviour. On occasions, students can be overly boisterous around the school but only a very small number of lessons are disrupted by inappropriate behaviour and this is a real improvement.

Nearly all students say they enjoy coming to college. They feel safe at college and know that if any bullying or racism should occur it will be treated seriously and dealt with effectively. The procedures that are in place to monitor and reward good attendance are very good and, as a result, students' attendance is improving. As one boy said, 'I used to take one day a week off, but not now!'

Students know the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and of keeping safe. They are keen to be part of the College Council and to act as prefects. They also recognise their wider social

responsibilities by raising money for a number of charities; for example, Year 9 raised £1700 for a leukaemia charity. Students' key skills are improving and they have a developing understanding of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Students are now more aware of what is expected of them and they have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. As a result, most students make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Students with learning difficulties are well supported by teaching assistants and this contributes effectively to their achievement. Teachers have responded well to support and training and most use a wider variety of teaching strategies in their lessons than in the past. As a result, the proportion of good and better teaching in college has increased. Features of improved teaching include good relationships between staff and students and planning that is clearly focussed on meeting the students' needs. The best lessons reflect the school's focus on assessment for learning. For example, in an outstanding physical education lesson, objectives for students' learning were linked very well to their levels of skill development with clear identification of how they could improve. High quality questioning and student engagement meant that they made at least good progress and that they had fun. Although the teaching is satisfactory, in some lessons opportunities are missed for students to work in groups for discussion and teachers spend too much time on teacher led activities. Inadequate teaching in the past has contributed to the legacy of students' current underachievement. Much improvement has been made to the quality of teaching and learning. However, a higher proportion of good teaching is required to aid students' improved achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Following the appointment of new college leaders, significant changes were made to the timetable and curriculum organisation. More vocational courses were offered and over the summer term in 2007, the college successfully revisited the options previously made by students in Year 9. As a result, the curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of individual students with improved courses and activities to prepare students for their working life. For example, a broader range of catering courses are now in place and the recent developments in the KS4 provision for science have contributed very well to overcoming the inadequate provision noted in the previous inspection.

Students have a smooth transition into Year 7 and lessons on 'learning to learn' greatly enhance the personal development and academic progress of younger students. There is an increasing and varied range of extracurricular programmes including sports and subject support. For example, students for whom English is an additional language, have after college provision when they take courses in photography and cooking. This enables them to share experiences from their own culture whilst improving their understanding of the college community. Within a short space of time the curriculum has been significantly strengthened. Students have spoken of the relevance and usefulness of courses which now provide them with good opportunities for career progression and support their improved progress in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The general safety, guidance and care of all students are high priorities for all staff. The commitment of staff and the very good partnerships established with other professionals have resulted in good quality provision being secured. For example, the procedures used to monitor and reward good attendance are very good and, as a result, students' attendance has improved. The college is working very hard to reintegrate students and, whilst taking very firm action on exclusions, the number of days of exclusions has fallen. The introduction of a specialist pastoral support team and an internal inclusion room, as well as courses on anger management, reflect the high quality procedures in place used to identify and support vulnerable students. The needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities are also met effectively. Staff provide strong support to these students and to their families.

Staff are aware of the essentials of health and safety procedures and there are appropriate policies and well established procedures for Child Protection so that students are able to work safely and feel secure. The transition arrangements in place for Year 7 have helped students to settle well. Students' academic guidance is developing. Much has been put in place since the time of the last inspection. Systems for tracking students' progress and identifying any underachievement are being used well. This information is used to get students back 'on track' with various strategies, such as senior staff mentoring Year 11 students who are at risk of underachieving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new and highly effective leadership of the college has had a major impact on the school's progress. Both the executive headteacher and head of school have high expectations of everyone to achieve their best and their expectation of themselves is no less demanding. The impact of this commitment and drive has been to engage all staff to work very hard towards improvement. Significant to this improvement is the very good partnership and working relationship with the Howard of Effingham School under the federation arrangements. In a very short time, much has been achieved. Teaching and learning have improved, the curriculum has improved, pupils enjoy school more and are making better progress in lessons. The science department is now led and managed well and the college's evidence shows that standards in science are beginning to rise. Targets set to raise standards were once too low. This is no longer the case. Targets are now challenging and students are working hard towards achieving them. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision is effective and self-evaluation across the college is now good.

Financial management of the school's finances has seen significant improvement. Newly introduced procedures are rigorous and contribute very well to the recent improvement of the college. The college is working well with the local authority and is also benefiting from its financial support. The college's Interim Executive Board is an effective body. The Board is knowledgeable, supportive and works well to hold the college to account as a critical friend. Although the college currently provides inadequate value for money, the college's rapid improvement demonstrates its good capacity to improve.

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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	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	2
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 school's self-evaluation	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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

17 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Thomas Knyvett College, Ashford, TW15 3DU

Thank you for welcoming us into college when we visited recently. We were pleased to hear that you believe your college is a better place to be. One of the main reasons that Thomas Knyvett has made such rapid improvement is because the college's leadership and management are much stronger now. Your executive headteacher and head of school have brought strong and effective leadership to the college and with the staff have made many positive changes. For your part, whilst recognising the very firm messages and high expectations of your behaviour, you are responding well to the good curriculum, support and guidance you receive. As a result, your overall behaviour and attendance have improved.

There is still some way to go to improve your achievement, particularly for those of you in Key Stage 4. Given what you achieved by the age of eleven in your primary schools, you should be doing better. Improvements in teaching are now making a difference and you are all beginning to make better progress in lessons. This is a particular feature of the very good progress made in the provision for science. Many of you commented on the significant improvement made in the science department, both in resources and in teaching. As a result, you now enjoy science lessons much more than you did. The most important thing for you to concentrate on now is to improve your learning and achievement across all subjects. We have asked the staff to make sure that teaching is as good as it can be to help make this happen.

The good improvements made have shown us that you all have the capacity to do well and so your college no longer needs to be subject to special measures. However, more needs to be done and Thomas Knyvett has been given a Notice to Improve which means that the college will receive another inspection in a year's time. As a result, we are asking you all to work with the staff to make sure that good teaching and learning increases so you consistently achieve well and standards are raised particularly at Key Stage 4.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley Her Majesty's Inspector