

# Minsthorpe Community College, A Specialist Science College

## Inspection report

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108282
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	324741
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Georgiana Sale

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1724
Sixth form	247
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Anne Dyer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Gregory
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Minsthorpe Lane South Elmsall Pontefract West Yorkshire

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324741

**Telephone number**

**Fax number**

WF9 2UJ

01977 723 810

01977 723 814

**Age group** 11-18

**Inspection dates** 17-18 June 2009

**Inspection number** 324741

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Minsthorpe Community College is a comprehensive college for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 situated to the south east of Wakefield serving the ex-mining villages of South Elmsall, South Kirkby and Upton. The area has an above-average level of social disadvantage and has been undergoing considerable regeneration since the closure of the coal mines; the college plays a significant part in this process. The college community is predominantly White British and few students speak English as an additional language. The number of students identified as having specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The college has been a specialist science college since September 2003. There is a children's centre on site which is managed by the college which provides daycare for children from the local community from 0 to 5 years. The quality of this provision is reported in the Early Years Foundation Stage sections in this report. Integrated children's services for the community are also provided by this centre.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Minsthorpe is a good college. It has many outstanding features and provides good value for money. The college plays a vital role in the regeneration of this ex-mining community and is a hub of activity throughout the day and evening for all ages. The highly caring and supportive nature of the staff and the relentless drive for improvement to make sure 'no child is left behind' run through the whole college community. Community cohesion is strong and influences the immediate college community and beyond. The college is very good at seeking out new partnerships and also uses established links very well to improve the curriculum and provide better support for their students. Students say that they feel safe, supported and encouraged to achieve their potential at all times, both in and out of class.

The acting Principal leads a newly formed dynamic leadership team, who with an able governing body, provide a clear strategic vision for the college. The college knows itself well, and there is regular and careful consideration of students' academic and pastoral development and consequent needs. Good progress has been made in relation to the areas identified for improvement since the last inspection. For example, the proportion of students gaining a good pass at GCSE in mathematics is now 9% above the national average.

Students enter Year 7 with standards which are broadly average. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 9 standards remain average. However, progress and achievement in Key Stage 4 are good and by the end of Year 11, standards are above national averages. In the past two years the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics has risen by 19. In 2008, the college had its best ever results with standards also well above the national average in science and modern languages. Students' good achievement reflects their positive attitudes in wanting to learn, the outstanding curriculum and the high expectations of the teaching staff.

Teaching is good. Students work hard in lessons, participate enthusiastically and are keen to answer questions. Teachers generally manage their classes well and they use praise and offer a wide variety of ways in which to learn to motivate their students. The curriculum is excellent and is well adapted to individual needs. It offers students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form a very wide variety of courses to follow. All staff contribute fully to the college's provision, so that activities beyond the timetabled curriculum offer a rich diet and add to the students' enjoyment of their time at college.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students speak very positively about the college; they enjoy attending, they think they are taught well and they want to gain good results in examinations. Students behave well both in and out of lessons, and their attendance is above average. They enjoy contributing to the college community and beyond, for example, through their charity work and work with local primary schools. They treat each other with care and respect and thrive in the culturally and spiritually rich environment of the college.

The college's specialism in science pervades the whole college in a very positive way, from hatching chicks in the 'Happy Days' children's centre to post 16 students gaining apprenticeships at local power stations. There is a wide range of science related courses at pre and post 16.

The college places a very strong emphasis on the importance of individual students and provides excellent support and care for all. This is especially so for more vulnerable students who thrive. The systems for academic guidance are very good. Students know how well they are doing and

staff meticulously track their progress and take quick action if they fall behind with their work. Teachers are given good data about the needs and progress of their students which helps them plan interesting and challenging lessons. Most of them give good advice to the students in class and in their books about how to progress to a higher level.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form provides a satisfactory quality of education and is competently led and managed. The capacity to improve has been strengthened as a result of the college's arrangements for a future collaborative Post 16 provision and the energy and drive from the newly appointed head of 16–19 Education and Training. The curriculum is good, and college leaders have forged innovative partnerships with other local education and training establishments to offer a much broader range of courses which will be available to the current Year 11 this year.

The sixth form aims to turn no one away and as a result attainment on entry is just below the national average. Overall, students make satisfactory progress to achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 13. However, nearly half the students follow vocational courses and they achieve much higher standards compared with those following more traditional academic courses; the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in vocational subjects was twice the national average last year.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, but with some variation between academic and vocational course areas. Care and support are good. Students are given good advice to improve the quality of their work and good course and career guidance when they leave college. Students develop their leadership skills by taking part in a range of duties, leading sporting activities and supporting the most-able Year 11 students. The sixth form development programme is effective and allows the students to become confident and mature young adults.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision for children from birth to five years is good. From their starting points children achieve well and by the time they are ready for full-time education most are working towards the expected early learning goals. Staff are led well by an experienced manager, and as a result, they work well together and practice is consistent in planning, observing and assessing children's progress. The key workers know the children well and their interests and individual needs are taken into account. Planning covers all areas of learning well with a good focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and social skills.

Right from the start, care is taken to promote children's well-being. Consequently, children adapt rapidly to routines and expectations, feel secure and begin to become confident learners, socialising and enjoying learning with others. For example, children follow instructions well, observe good hygiene practices, and enjoy healthy snacks and lunches prepared on the premises, knowing that water and fruit are good for them. The babies and toddlers enjoy exploring the properties of shredded paper and older children join in singing games with gusto. Curricular provision is rich indoors and out and resourced well. Effectively planned and presented activities motivate and challenge children to explore, and work independently or within a small group.

Self-evaluation is strong and areas of weakness have been addressed so that equality of opportunity for all children and the valuing of diversity are ensured. Strengths and weaknesses in provision are analysed clearly and this has led to improvement taking place since the last

inspection. Staff know that children's skills are better in listening than in speaking. In most areas of learning, staff support children effectively to learn and develop but some opportunities are missed to develop speaking skills further. This impacts on progress made in the thinking and problem solving skills across the areas of learning, although this is good, overall. To bring about further improvement, staff are beginning to take part in a local authority initiative 'Every Child A Talker'. Partnership with parents and other agencies and businesses is outstanding and promoted extremely well by the manager who is influential in gaining funding to develop the setting further. There is good capacity for future development.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the rate of progress in Key Stage 3 so that it matches that in Key Stage 4.
- Share good practice in the sixth form to remove the inconsistency seen in teaching and learning between academic and vocational courses.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the college with broadly average standards and, by the time they leave in Year 11, their achievement is good and standards are above average. Relative to their capabilities, students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent overall progress. This is because their progress is closely monitored and a combination of pastoral and academic goals is used to help them do their best. Furthermore, good individual or group support is given by well trained learning support assistants.

Standards at the end of Year 9 were below the national averages between 2005–2007. However, in 2008, standards increased and are now broadly average. Secure data produced by the college consolidates a three year rise so students now make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9. The college has recognised this as an area to improve to further increase their Key Stage 4 results.

Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved year-on-year to be above average. The proportion of students gaining five good passes at GCSE has risen from 65% in 2006 to 78% in 2008. The college has also been successful in raising the proportion of students gaining good passes that include English and mathematics: since 2006 the overall figure has leapt up by 19%. Mathematics performed very well in 2008 with the proportion of good passes increasing by 23% in one year. The number of other subjects which outperform the national average is growing with science, English, mathematics geography, physical education and design technology performing well in 2008. Standards are well above average in modern foreign languages with the proportion of students who gained a pass at the end of Year 11 in 2008 nearly double the national average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding and this is demonstrated by their positive behaviour, above average attendance, good achievement and enthusiastic enjoyment of college life. Staff value the individuality of students. Students are exceptionally well nurtured and they thrive academically and personally. Students are confident and mature and relationships between students and staff are warm and supportive.

Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, supported by an excellent personal development programme. The vibrant displays around the college exemplify the students' many opportunities to experience and take part in cultural and sporting events.

Students are very aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and the vast majority of them take an enthusiastic part in extra-curricular activities. 3000 students made off-site visits last year and in all their activities in and around college, students pay attention to acting safely and they look after each other well. Students say that there are always adults to help and that problems get sorted out quickly.

Students make effective and positive contributions to their own community, local and wider communities through their charity work. For example, £1500 was raised to send computers to a college in Brazil. Students visit and work with colleges within the United Kingdom that have a very different ethnic mix to their own college and say that they have really enjoyed and learned a lot from these experiences.

The systematic building up of students' personal skills enhances their self-confidence as they move through the college. This, together with carefully organised two-week work-placements, good information and communication technology (ICT) and core subject skills and a variety of vocational courses, ensure that students develop good work-based skills and as a result they are successfully prepared for their working lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The improvement in the overall quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection has been a major factor in raising standards and moving the college forward. Lessons are clearly focused on the impact of teaching so that the vast majority of students benefit from consistently good teaching. Most lessons are now good or better because of the careful checking on lessons, sharing good practice and effective staff development planned and carried out by the leadership team. Teachers know their students well. Excellent relationships ensure teachers and students work together so that there are the right conditions in the classrooms for everyone to learn. Teachers' high expectations result in productive lessons and well motivated students. Teachers use information about students' abilities to set challenging targets and to plan work so that there is a good match of activities to students' needs. Achievement is good because of the excellent support offered.

Good paired and collaborative work was observed in many lessons and was coupled in the best lessons with students assessing their own work against examination board criteria. However, this is not yet consistent across Key Stages 3 and 4.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. Since the last inspection, the college has successfully developed and extended the curriculum to provide students with a flexible, evolving range of opportunities, courses and choices which are increasingly tailored to individual needs. Good examples are the development of the learning pathways in Key Stage 4 designed to meet the individual needs of students and linking into the world of work. There is a strong focus on academic subjects, but the college is constantly diversifying to meet the needs of students and offers many



vocational courses. Personalised learning programmes are used effectively to meet the needs of those who have difficulty with learning or who are vulnerable, resulting this year in the vast majority of students going on to either employment or training.

Students benefit well from the college's specialist status; they are able to take three separate science courses and an applied science course. Special events, such as a visit by the Star Chaser rocket, enterprise days, special activities for gifted and talented students and theatre company visits help to enrich the curriculum. The take-up of a modern foreign language is high, with more than 70% learning French at Key Stage 4. A widening range of qualifications and accreditation is enabling greater access for students of all abilities.

The college extends its vision of developing the whole-person by offering a very wide range and number of extra-curricular opportunities, including sporting, language and arts based activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care guidance and support is outstanding. The high quality care and attention provided for students enables them to make good progress academically and outstanding progress in their personal development. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the large number of vulnerable students receive outstanding support from a committed, skilled and knowledgeable team of specialists. The college is proactive in liaising with a wide range of relevant partner agencies to meet their needs. Systems to care for and guide the significant number of looked after children are highly effective, and as a result, they make outstanding progress. Learning mentors, teaching assistants and others provide outstanding support for all students which is informed by frequent checks made on their academic progress and personal development. One student said that the support from his learning mentor had enabled him to 'turn the corner'.

There are effective systems for checking on students' progress and identifying any underperformance, leading to highly focused intervention, which makes sure that underachievement is quickly remedied. Most students know their targets and say that they receive very good guidance on how to improve their work and how to reach them. Excellent arrangements are in place for pupils moving from primary schools and students settle quickly into college life. Transition to employment or further education is also well managed. Systems for child protection and safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management at all levels are good. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive; one said 'the school has encouraged, supported and challenged all of our children'. The acting Principal provides analytical and dynamic leadership and, with the newly formed senior team, gives strong drive and direction to the work of the college. All team leaders and individual teachers are focused on raising achievement and this has resulted in a marked improvement in Key Stage 4 GCSE results over the past three years.

All staff are involved in the college's self-evaluation. Areas for development are correctly identified and relevant actions are planned both at departmental and whole- college level.

Thorough evaluation of teaching and learning leads to the identification of underachieving students and intervention ensures that they get back on track. Teaching is regularly and accurately monitored; good practice is shared and effective support and professional development given to staff when required, especially in Key Stage 3 and 4. This, together with a regular curricular review, inform the staff training plans to make sure that the quality and breadth of learning increases.

Finances and resources are well managed. The governing body has worked hard to seek out funding streams which, together with the resources of the college, have enabled a new sports hall to be built and a new training centre, jointly funded with other educational partners, to be opened. The governors are particularly astute in sourcing funding to achieve its aims of serving the community. For example, funds were raised by staff and governors to build the well equipped purpose built children's centre on site. The centre benefits the staff and the community who take advantage of the good care and education offered. Liaison is continued for children, as from this good start as most join the local schools. Communication between the college and the governors is open and consultative and governors are well informed about the college's strengths and areas for development.



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
---	----------------	-------

## 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 school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1	

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

## 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 school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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 school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Minsthorpe Community College, A Specialist Science College, Pontefract, WF9 2UJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your college recently. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers and visiting some of your lessons.

We agree with you that Minsthorpe is a good college. It is a special place because of the excellent care and support that it gives you. As well as helping you to achieve good results in examinations, the college helps you to become responsible, caring young people. For those of you in the sixth form the provision is satisfactory. You set a good example for younger students. You all work hard in lessons and it is also good to see that you involve yourselves in a wide range of activities that help the college and the community.

You told us how much you enjoy your lessons and how friendly and supportive the teachers are. We were pleased to see your enthusiastic participation in all aspects of college life and can see why you enjoy the many after college clubs and other activities on offer.

You have a good Principal, Mr Gregory, and excellent teachers who lead the college well. Your parents really care about your education and are represented by a good governing body that supports Mr Gregory in making sure you get the best.

Your Principal, governors and staff want to make your college better and we have asked them to do the following:

- look for ways to make the teaching and learning in the sixth form even better
- improve standards at Key Stage 3.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection of your college. We enjoyed spending the two days with you and wish you every success in the future.