

# The Minster College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116941
<b>Local Authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326497
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Sims HMI

This inspection of the school 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>	
School (total)	646
Sixth form	71
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	P Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Adrian Long
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	South Street Leominster HR6 8JJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01568 613221
<b>Fax number</b>	01568 613622

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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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

The Minster College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has had specialist status as a sports college since 2003. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and for whom English is an additional language is very small. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above the national average. The level of social disadvantage is average but with areas of rural disadvantage. Extensive building work for the new college was taking place during the inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The Minster College provides a satisfactory standard of education. Since the last inspection, examination results at GCSE have risen, the curriculum provision has improved and recently the senior leadership team has been strengthened. The new principal has a clear view of what changes are needed to secure further improvements in standards, and in teaching and learning. He receives strong support from the senior leadership team who are determined to bring about change, not least to the slow pace of the college day. The ethos of the college has been built on good relationships. To date there has been insufficient time to see the bulk of the impact of this and consequently, the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Students join and leave The Minster having reached levels of attainment that are broadly in line with the national average so their overall achievement is satisfactory. They do much better in mathematics than in English where there has been a steady decline in progress in recent years. Personal development and well-being is good and this is characterised by the consistently good relationships and standards of behaviour in and around the college. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good overall.

Although the senior leadership team have placed a determined focus on teaching and learning, it remains satisfactory; an increasing proportion of lessons are good, however. The most consistent feature that prevents teaching and learning from being good is the slow pace of lessons, some of which are double lessons. Lessons also sometimes lack sufficient challenge to prepare students to reach the highest GCSE grades. The curriculum is good, both in the main college and in the sixth form. Students have access to a varied choice of courses to suit all their needs and nearly all are able to do the courses of their first choice. The sports college status plays a large part in giving students numerous extra-curricular opportunities which they take up in very high numbers.

The care and careers guidance students receive are of a high standard, although the quality of the academic guidance is varied, with many unsure how they need to improve. Whilst partnerships with outside agencies are strong, there is more work to do to engage with parents, a significant minority of whom sense a lack of communication from the college. Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory.

The relatively new senior leadership team is strong and is well supported by the governing body but there are inconsistencies at middle management level. Action taken to date has not secured improvements in areas identified by the college as weaknesses. Subject leaders are being held increasingly to account for the performance of their departments through more use of data analysis but this work is still early in its development.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students have positive attitudes to learning and make an impressive contribution to college activities and the local community. They make satisfactory progress in their courses, starting sixth form courses with lower standards from their GCSE examinations than are typical nationally. Overall, standards reached on A-level courses are below average, but students who continue on to higher education generally succeed in doing so. Many students follow vocational courses, and the large majority achieve the intended

qualifications. Most students who followed a diploma course in sport in 2008 gained distinctions or merits. A very large majority of students complete the courses they begin.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good elements. The extensive curriculum gives students of different abilities and interests the opportunity to continue their education at the college. Extra-curricular activities give students many chances to extend their learning and skills, especially in sport. Students receive satisfactory support and guidance with their work; they much appreciate the help they receive in preparing for the next stage of education or employment. Leadership and management are satisfactory in ensuring students' achievement and the quality of education that they receive.

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

- Increase progress and standards in English.
- Ensure more good teaching and learning by increasing pace and challenge in lessons and throughout the college day.
- Improve the quality and consistency of target setting and review, ensuring students and their parents are informed regularly how well they are doing and how they could achieve higher levels or grades.
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by ensuring that middle leaders monitor and evaluate the impact of their departments consistently.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Students join the college at the start of Year 7 having achieved levels that are in line with national averages for English, mathematics and science. Students make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 so that by the end of Year 11, standards are broadly average. The most recent GCSE results indicate a continued rising trend in the percentage of students who gained five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent. The percentage achieving five good grades including English and mathematics has also risen over the last three years and is now very close to the national average. The proportion of students achieving 5 A\* to G grades is similar to the national average. All students achieved one pass at GCSE in 2008.

Students' progress is much better in mathematics than English where there has been a three-year decline in achievement and attainment. There is also a significant difference in attainment between English literature and English language, as only the highest attaining students are entered for literature despite the generous curriculum time allocated to all students in English. Overall, not enough students go on to achieve the very highest grades in GCSE subjects. There are no significant differences in the progress of students by gender or ethnicity. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with that of their peers.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students are considerate towards each other. Bullying incidents reported are few, as the result of successful initiatives which have involved students themselves, and students say they feel very safe. Bullying is still a concern for a few parents, however. Students behave well both in

and out of lessons. Whilst many of them enjoy college, a significant minority do not. Attendance is broadly average. Students have an informed awareness of developing healthier lifestyles, particularly through a high level of participation in sport, and seeking healthier options in the college canteen. The college council was partly instrumental in achieving the Healthy Colleges Award. Students are prepared well for the future through work-related learning, such as the enterprise modules studied in Years 9 and 10. Students develop the skills of leadership and teamwork through practical sessions, reflecting the real world of work.

The college promotes the students' social development successfully, especially through sports events which allow them to mix with other young people. The college council makes a significant contribution to college life, for example in the planning of the new building. Students say their voice is heard in decision-making. There are numerous fundraising events for charity, organised and run by the students themselves. Assemblies and citizenship lessons enable them to reflect on qualities such as tolerance and compassion for others. As a result, they have a strong sense of right and wrong. There is limited spiritual development in the tutor time and assemblies. The college is working hard to broaden the students' cultural experience through links with other colleges, and a wide variety of trips both at home and abroad.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Senior leaders are working hard to improve the quality of teaching but so far, its impact is limited. No outstanding teaching, to which other teachers can aspire, was seen in the college during the inspection. The range of assessment information available on students' prior attainment is increasing. However, lesson planning does not always use the information available effectively enough to ensure that work is challenging and fully adapted to meet the learning needs of the whole class. Much of the marking of students' work is of good quality, but there are also examples of students receiving minimal advice on how to improve it. Relationships are good between teachers and students in almost all lessons. Consequently, students behave well and respond in a positive manner to teachers' questions.

Students enjoy lessons where they are active, such as in physical education or in practical activities in science, but too many lessons do not run at a pace that is brisk enough to sustain students' interest. Students are insufficiently involved in taking the lead in learning for themselves or working in pairs and small groups, although there are such opportunities in food technology and textiles. There is inconsistency in the coordination of teachers' work with that of classroom assistants, but there is good support for students with learning difficulties and those at an early stage in learning English when they are supported in small groups or individually.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The college uses its specialist status as a sports college well to encourage uptake of sport. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available to students, which has led to one of the highest participation rates in England. There is a high take-up of foreign languages at Key Stage 4, where students can choose two languages if they wish. There is an increasing range of vocational courses on offer which meet the diverse needs of individual students. There

are additional courses for gifted and talented students after college. Nearly all students at Key Stage 4 and post-16 get to study their first choice courses. Students are consulted over curriculum courses available in Year 10.

The college is developing opportunities for students to take GCSE examinations early, for example in science. Consequently, some students have been able to experience AS-level work in Year 11. In Key Stage 3, accelerated courses have led to some GCSE courses starting early in Year 9. Some double lessons are very long, which can slow the pace of students' learning. The overall college day has a leisurely pace with breaks between lessons and a late start to the day. The citizenship curriculum supports students' understanding of their place within the wider community. There are limited opportunities to develop understanding of Britain as a diverse and multicultural society.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school leadership understands the context in which the school works and what is needed to meet students' needs. Support for students when they move key stages is a strength, particularly the individual interviews offered to students in Year 11. Provision for different groups of learners is good; pupils from Traveller communities, for example, receive additional support, both in class and through additional literacy lessons, resulting in improved attainment. Careers guidance is good and helps students to make informed choices. Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and all staff receive regular child protection training. The college has strong links with other agencies such as social services, the college nurse and counsellor to support the needs of vulnerable students. A parent commented positively on the care and medical support offered to students.

Initiatives to improve attendance further are currently underdeveloped; a small minority of students are persistently absent. Some aspects of academic monitoring and tracking are still in their infancy. Students understand that they have targets but do not always understand their significance. Advice on how to achieve targets is inconsistent so students cannot say what they need to do to improve. Parental responses indicate that a significant number do not know how well their child is progressing, particularly in Year 7. The role of tutors as academic mentors is underdeveloped. The considerable amount of tutor time is generally not used productively enough to support students' learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new principal and senior leadership team have a clear shared vision for the college, but the impact of this vision is not yet developed. Parents feel some lack of communication with the college, but there is goodwill to support the changes required. The leadership team has a realistic view of the college's strengths and weaknesses and monitor the quality of teaching and learning through regular lesson observations and college reviews. Points for development from department reviews lack sufficient evaluation to establish their impact on achievement. Self-evaluation and monitoring are less consistent amongst middle leaders. Leadership and management in English are inadequate. The college is establishing stronger systems for accountability through regular link meetings and more monitoring for both curriculum and pastoral leaders. Governors understand the strengths and

weaknesses of the college well and are developing their role to provide challenge to the leadership. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

The college is developing its use of data to monitor pupil progress, but there is limited evidence of impact. The use of targets is not systematic, and a lack of clarity about the significance of targets amongst both students and parents limits their impact in raising standards. There is good use of targets, for example in modern foreign languages, but overall there is limited evidence of targets being used clearly and consistently to monitor pupil progress, including the progress of particular groups. The impact of the college's specialism is evident in increased opportunities for students both within the curriculum and beyond it. The college's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The college understands its local community well and the sports specialism impacts positively on local issues linked to socio-economic disadvantage, such as obesity. The college is working hard to broaden the students' cultural experience of the United Kingdom and the wider world through links with other colleges, and a variety of trips both at home and abroad.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	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?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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/or disabilities make progress	3	

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<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>	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
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?	3	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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 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**

6 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Minster College, Leominster, HR6 8JJ

You will be aware that we recently visited your college. Thank you to all of you who took time to talk to us and tell us your views about your college.

The Minster provides a satisfactory standard of education. Your new principal and senior leaders are working hard to build upon the improvements we have seen in the curriculum, which is good, and the increase in the proportion of you getting at least five good grades at GCSE. Many of you take full advantage of the numerous extra-curricular activities available, particularly in sport.

We think you behave well in lessons and in and around the college, and get on well together and with your teachers. You have told us you feel safe and you are looked after well during your time at the college. Those of you who are older receive good guidance about your future careers.

We have made a few suggestions to the college leaders on how to make further improvements. Whilst your attainment is approximately in line with the national average, we think you could achieve higher results given your starting points, particularly in English. More of your lessons could be good if the pace were faster and the challenge greater. Most of you know your targets in your different subjects but you are often unsure how to achieve higher grades. We have asked the leaders to make sure your teachers regularly inform you how to achieve this. We have also asked the leaders to check more consistently you are doing in all your subjects. I am sure you will play your part in helping the college improve further.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at The Minster College and are successful in your future career.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector