

# Thomas Knyvett College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125272
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	328329
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Maria Dawes 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	532
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Gladys Spedding
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rhona Barnfield / Mrs Nicola Aboud (Head of School)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Stanwell Road Ashford TW15 3DU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01784 243 824
<b>Fax number</b>	01784 240 050

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Thomas Knyvett College is a small secondary school on the borders of Surrey and London with approximately one fifth of students coming from the London Borough of Hounslow. A significant proportion of students join the college other than at the beginning of Year 7. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has increased to about one third and a small number are at an early stage of learning English. About one quarter of students are identified with learning difficulties or disabilities, notably behavioural, emotional or social difficulties, moderate learning difficulties or other specific learning difficulty.

Since May 2007 Thomas Knyvett has been part of the Howard Partnership, a federation formed of the Howard of Effingham School and Thomas Knyvett College. The schools share an executive headteacher in addition to some other senior and middle leaders.

The school was inspected as the Ash Technology College in May 2007 and judged to still require special measures, having been in this category for the previous two years. In November 2007 it was inspected again and given a notice to improve because although significant improvement was required in relation to standards and achievement at Key Stage 4, it was judged to have good capacity to improve.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Students and staff are unanimous in their belief that Thomas Knyvett is a greatly improved school. Much has been achieved in the last eighteen months. Good leadership and management, supported by the Howard Partnership, have led to better teaching and an improved curriculum, enabling students to redress their previous underachievement. Students' behaviour and attitudes to school are now good and their achievement is satisfactory and improving. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the college no longer requires significant improvement. Students are increasingly proud of their college and appreciative of the changes that have happened.

GCSE results improved last year and, in particular, the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C passes with mathematics and English moved close to the national average. Although this represented satisfactory achievement from when these students started at secondary school, it was a significant improvement from their position the previous year, following four years of underachievement. Current Year 11 students are expected to exceed last year's results and the majority of students are on track to meet their challenging targets.

Central to the successful improvements in students' progress and attitudes to school is the good curriculum, which is well suited to their needs and interests. There is a wide range of vocational courses provided both in school and in collaboration with local colleges. The students' enthusiasm for these courses was demonstrated by their engagement in preparing, presenting and evaluating an afternoon tea party during the inspection as part of their catering coursework.

The quality of teaching has continued to improve since the last inspection and for the first time in many years is good. This is due to robust and regular monitoring, targeted support and coaching, and increasingly regular sharing of good practice both between and within departments. Students are learning effectively and catching up from the legacy of poor provision. However, more time is still needed for this to have the full impact on their achievement over time. Lessons have many strengths, notably students' positive attitudes to learning, their good relationships with staff and the very calm and pleasant classroom environment. Students are clear about what is expected of them and lessons move at a brisk pace. However, in some lessons, although teachers work skilfully with students on an individual basis, work and support are often insufficiently varied to meet the needs and abilities of all students. As a consequence, the level of challenge is not always right for everyone and some students make less progress than they might. Although teachers are frequently providing tasks that are varied and interesting and actively engage students, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enrich teaching and facilitate learning is not well developed.

Students' personal development is good and students are well cared for and supported. Particularly good support is provided for those students encountering difficult or challenging times. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage in learning English are well supported, helping them to make good progress. Numerous students say that behaviour has improved considerably and relationships between all members of this increasingly diverse community are good. Understanding of and involvement with the wider community is, however, somewhat limited. Students are increasingly making a positive contribution to the college community through mentoring, prefect work and fundraising for charity. However, not all groups of students are fully involved in all aspects of college life and this is not always clearly monitored.

Pivotal to the improvements have been the executive headteacher and head of school. Together with the senior staff they have established a shared vision for the college's work and all staff have worked unstintingly towards this. As one member of staff commented, 'We have not taken our foot off the pedal!' Support for departments, frequently from middle leaders at the Howard of Effingham School, has led to increasingly effective middle leadership. Senior leaders know the college very well and are clear about what elements are strong and what needs to be improved. Students' academic progress is regularly tracked and monitored. However, some students, particularly those without prior Key Stage 2 results, do not have targets and their progress is not as rigorously analysed. A highly effective Interim Executive Board supports and challenges the college and a shadow governing body is currently being inducted. The college has established outstanding relationships with others, including through the Howard Partnership, to support its work with students and staff. The college has good capacity to improve further.

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

- Improve teaching further by:
  - consistently ensuring that work and support in lessons is more closely matched to the needs of all students
  - ensuring that ICT is more consistently used to enhance students' learning.
- Ensure that the monitoring of student outcomes is rigorous in its analysis of all individuals and groups of students.
- Extend students' understanding of the wider community and strengthen the impact of the college's contribution to community cohesion.

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' attainment on entry to the college varies significantly between year groups from broadly average to below average.

Following a legacy of poor teaching and curriculum, interventions through the Howard Partnership enabled last year's Year 11 students to make up much lost ground. The proportion of students achieving five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE was significantly higher than previous years and very close to the national average. However, the proportion of five A\* to C grades when all subjects are included, while showing an improvement from 2007, remained below the national average because of poor performance in a number of departments and for some groups of students. Overall, this represented satisfactory achievement for this year group. The continued impact of actions taken by the college is now enabling students to make more effective progress, and current Year 11 students are expected to exceed their challenging targets and bridge the gap between the college and national standards. This is particularly so in science, where previous underachievement has been effectively addressed.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2008 in English were in line with national averages but well below national averages in mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory progress overall for this group of students although lower-attaining students made better progress across all subjects. College tracking data for the current Year 9 students shows that

improvements in teaching and learning are now impacting on their previous underachievement and standards are moving closer to the national average in science and mathematics.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly in improving their levels of literacy and numeracy because of support that is very well focused on meeting their individual needs.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students are increasingly proud of their college and good relationships ensure that most students enjoy school and are confident about talking to their teachers or other adults if they have any worries. Students told inspectors about the considerable improvement in behaviour in class and around the college in the last two years. The number of short-term and permanent exclusions has fallen by two thirds over the last two years. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Throughout the college there is a harmonious and thoughtful atmosphere and students show good concern for the needs of others by raising funds for charities. They are keen to learn, although occasionally they become passive or inattentive when tasks are insufficiently challenging. Some students take responsibility well outside lessons, ensuring that they make a good contribution to the college community. For example, older students act as mentors to the younger ones, helping them settle into their new school or supporting them with their reading. However, students' contribution to and involvement in the life of the wider community is limited.

Students develop healthy lifestyles by selecting from a range of healthy options at lunchtime and taking frequent exercise and they have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Attendance is below average, but is showing signs of improving as a result of the considerable efforts the college has put into encouraging students to attend regularly. Students' good personal development, along with generally average basic skills, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching this year is enabling students to redress the legacy of underachievement more rapidly. Teachers usually have high expectations of students' behaviour, and classrooms provide an orderly and pleasant place to learn. The overwhelming majority of students respond by enjoying the time they spend at college and by being helpful and cooperative. Lessons are well planned and the best engage the students' attention at a number of different levels. Lessons move at a good pace enabling effective learning to take place. However, although tasks are increasingly varied, too much of the work is set for the whole class and does not fully take into account the needs of different groups.

Skilful one-to-one questioning usually keeps individual students on their toes, but teachers are sometimes more tentative when addressing the whole class. As a result, learning is not always effectively extended and students are not given sufficient opportunities to share their own ideas and consolidate their understanding. Teaching assistants provide good support and boost students' confidence when they find learning difficult. However, the extent to which teachers use ICT to support learning and engage students remains limited.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 2

Since the college became part of the Howard Partnership it has developed a broader, more flexible and relevant curriculum that meets students' needs well. Working closely with Howard of Effingham School, local further education colleges and local specialist providers, the college has significantly changed the traditional curriculum and extended the range of vocational courses provided. For example, the more appropriate science curriculum is leading to better achievement in science, and students in Years 10 and 11 are welcoming the opportunity to undertake an increasing range of accredited vocational courses. While the choice of diploma courses is currently limited, where possible, the college makes arrangements for individual students to undertake courses of their choice.

The college is working closely within the Howard Partnership to improve provision for students with particular gifts and talents and the curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of additional revision classes and activities that take place outside the traditional school day.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The college supports students' personal needs well, ensuring that they are happy and confident. Procedures for safeguarding students are firmly in place and are effective. The college works closely with external agencies and parents to help support vulnerable students, including those who start school at times other than the beginning of Year 7. Consequently, students feel safe and report that members of staff deal with any concerns they have to their satisfaction. Students with learning difficulties are identified swiftly, and clear targets are set in their individual education plans which contribute greatly to the good progress these students make.

There are improved procedures for assessing students' academic progress. Most students know their targets and regularly review these against progress. Teachers' assessment judgements are now more consistent and reliable due to the shared work with and moderation by staff at the Howard of Effingham School. The college successfully identifies a group of Year 11 students who need additional support and intervention. However, this is limited in impact due to the large size of the group.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The incisive and resolute leadership of the executive headteacher, head of school and senior leadership team has been key to overcoming major barriers, bringing about swift but sustainable improvements in the quality of education at the college. The Howard Partnership has been integral in facilitating this, providing shared leadership and good bespoke support for leaders and managers at all levels. The clear vision of the Partnership - 'bringing out the best' - has been taken on board by staff who are highly supportive of changes, in particular those designed to raise the standard of teaching and learning and improve students' achievement. Spirits are high.

College self-evaluation is regular and targeted and helps to focus managers on key areas for improvement. In particular, regular lesson observations have contributed to the college having a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning.

This has led to support, both for the staff as a whole and for individuals, to improve their practice. The college has secure systems in place to monitor and track student progress. However, some students, particularly those who arrive from another country, do not have targets set in line with those who enter the college in Year 7. Therefore their progress is not as clearly monitored and the college is not always clear about the impact of provision on their outcomes. Middle leadership is strong and developing further, supported by clear lines of accountability and guidance from the senior leadership team and, at times, middle leaders from the Howard of Effingham School. Middle leaders say they feel empowered and as one commented are 'given training, responsibility and trust' to do their job.

Leaders have created a college with a completely harmonious environment, in which students from all backgrounds and cultures work and play well together. However, the college is at the early stages of planning and evaluating its provision for community cohesion, which is satisfactory overall.



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

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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
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	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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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
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**

11 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Thomas Knyvett College, Ashford, TW15 3DU

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your college. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say. We appreciated your openness and honesty; you are proud of your college. There have clearly been many improvements in the last year. Our main finding is that the Thomas Knyvett College provides you with a satisfactory education and that it has many good features.

We were impressed with the atmosphere around the college and many of you were very eager to tell us how much better behaviour is now. You feel safe in school and are keen to do as well as you can. We found students to be polite and friendly and relationships between all members of the college community were good.

Teaching and learning has improved and we saw many good lessons during the inspection. We also judged a strength of the college to be the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4 where it meets your needs very well. As a result of these improvements, you are making much better progress and catching up lost ground rapidly.

To improve your college further we have asked the college to:

- ensure that teachers set work that is always well matched to your ability
- extend your understanding of and opportunities to work with others in the local, national and international communities
- ensure that all students have targets and that leaders and managers monitor outcomes for all individuals and groups.

Your college has come a long way in a short period of time. A great deal of this is due to the excellent leadership of the executive headteacher and head of school along with the commitment of all staff. I am sure that you will continue to support them in making further improvements by fully getting involved in all aspects of college life.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector