

# The Community Science College At Thornhill

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107777
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	336949
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jan Bennett 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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	661
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Brian Hagger
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Powell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Valley Drive Thornhill Dewsbury WF12 0HE
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 32 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of management documentation, external evaluation reports, students' books and 184 parental, 158 student and 47 staff questionnaires. Just under two-fifths of the available inspection time was spent observing lessons.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- students' achievement, focusing on differences in performance between groups and the attainment and progress of current students
- the quality of teaching, especially in English and mathematics, and whether the teaching approaches being used are meeting the needs of all students
- the quality of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 and whether it is enabling students to make good progress
- the college's capacity to sustain the improvements in students' achievement.

## Information about the school

This Community Science College is smaller than average and the number of students on roll has fallen since the last inspection. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is above average. Around a third of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and more than average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national figure, but a higher than average number have a statement of special educational need. The Key Stage 2 results for students joining the college show that their attainment on entry is below average. Thornhill has been a specialist science college since September 2003 and has both the Healthy Schools Award and the Kirklees Gold Standard.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

The Community Science College at Thornhill has improved rapidly since the last inspection and is good. The headteacher and new senior leadership team have prioritised well and introduced successful strategies that have improved the quality of provision. A marked increase in the number of applications from students wanting to join Year 7 next September shows that the college has restored its reputation and has the confidence of local parents.

The benefits of the improvements are apparent in better outcomes for students. Attendance has improved and the college has been particularly successful in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent. Behaviour has improved and is now good. Students are making an increasing contribution to the college and wider community and there has been a steady upward trend in attainment since the last inspection. The full impact of strategies to raise standards is showing for the first time in external examination results this academic year. Early GCSE results in both English and mathematics show considerable improvement. The standard of students' work across the college is average and they make good progress.

Very robust target setting and review procedures have been introduced to track students' progress and target any necessary support efficiently. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been expanded to meet students' needs more effectively, but further work needs to be done to ensure that students' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are being developed and applied across the curriculum. Care, guidance and support have been strengthened and are good. Gaps in staffing that undermined the quality of teaching in previous years, have been filled and the quality of teaching is good. The college has used close links with the local university to recruit very promising newly qualified teachers. They are supported well and making good progress. Lessons are skilfully structured to include a good variety of activities. Students participate well and they enjoy their learning. There are excellent examples of teachers using assessment to enhance learning, but there is room for further development. Marking is not yet of a consistently good standard and not all teachers are setting tasks that meet the needs of everyone in the class.

Governors, leaders and managers have a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They are fully aware of some divisions within their local community and recognise that the college needs to do more to promote community cohesion. The senior and middle leadership teams are working increasingly well together and continue to drive the college forward at a rapid pace. Effective action has been taken to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection and the college has shown a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve students' employability skills by developing and applying literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects across the curriculum.
  - Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and the use of assessment, by:
    - ensuring that the quality of marking is good across the college
    - improving the quality of written feedback to students so that they are clear about what to do to improve their work
    - using assessment information to tailor tasks and activities more closely to the needs of different groups within the class.
- Take a more active role in promoting community cohesion in both the college and the community.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>2</b>
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Attainment has been below average since the last inspection but has risen steadily. Improvements in teaching and in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, coupled with the introduction of robust tracking systems and carefully targeted interventions, are having a big impact on current attainment. For example, GCSE results achieved by current Year 11 students in English show a 15% rise in the proportion of high grade passes. More students are expected to achieve a high grade in the summer and the college is predicting a further increase of 9%. GCSE mathematics modular results also show a marked improvement. Based on these results the school is confident that over half of Year 11 students will achieve five high grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The robust student tracking data have proved a very reliable predictor of external examination results in the past and show that attainment is improving in both key stages. The standard of students' work seen during the inspection was average. The school has met its specialist college targets in science and mathematics.

Students make good progress. School tracking data and the progress seen in lessons confirm this. Lessons move at a lively pace and students learn well. Statistical analysis comparing the progress made by Thornhill students with similar students nationally, show students' progress is improving year on year. In 2009, Thornhill was in the top 30% nationally and students are making considerably better progress this year. Over the last few years, there have been some wide gaps in the performance of different groups of students. Last year, for example, Year 11 girls did not make the progress expected whereas boys made good progress. The gap has closed this year with both girls and boys making good progress. Likewise, specific groups of students with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties have under-performed in the past but they are making better progress this year. Students in mainstream lessons are skilfully supported by teaching assistants and make good progress and students working in the Thorn Centre also learn well.

Many aspects of students' personal development have improved since the last inspection

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and are good. Students play an active part in school life through the work of the 'junior leadership team', management of many fundraising activities and planning the new college building. They make a valuable contribution to the local community, particularly through activities linked to the specialism such as the 'young engineers' work in primary schools. Students participate well in extra-curricular sports and are increasingly choosing healthier lifestyles. Students say that they are safe in college and the vast majority of parents agree. The proportion of college leavers going into education, employment or training has increased over the last three years, but students need better literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in order to be well-prepared for the workplace. Students have a good appreciation of different cultures and religions, behave with consideration towards each other and are polite and welcoming to visitors. There is a low incidence of bullying and racism in college, but students from White British backgrounds and those of Asian heritage coexist as separate communities within the college during unstructured time. They engage with each other in lessons, but any social interaction is very limited.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Teaching was good or better in around two-thirds of the lessons observed. Lessons are well planned and include a good range of activities that keep students engaged. Teaching assistants provide good support and students work effectively in small groups and individually. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and motivate students to learn. Teachers use effective questioning to check students' understanding and to make them think. Students are encouraged to assess their own work, but this is sometimes done too hurriedly at the end of a lesson to benefit learning. The quality of marking is variable. Spelling and punctuation mistakes sometimes go unchecked and written feedback does not always explain how work could be improved. In most lessons, extension work and probing questions are used to stretch the more-able students and extra support is given to those who struggle. In the best lessons, however, separate tasks are planned that are skilfully matched to the differing needs and abilities of small groups within the class enabling everyone to engage fully and learn well.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum is strong. By working in partnership with other providers the college is able to offer students a wide choice including vocational programmes and courses to re-engage those in danger of becoming disaffected. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is being developed. Subject areas and departments are working together on integrated projects, such as the genetics project led by science, and there is good development of students' personal learning and thinking skills. The enrichment programme is good and students participate well in extra-curricular activities. More work is needed, however, to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the entire curriculum.

The college has close links with local primary schools and transition arrangements are good. There are effective systems in place to encourage good attendance including a first day absence call-up system. Vulnerable students receive very good support and effective use is made of external agencies and organisations. The Thorn Centre provides a good alternative curriculum and support for students who are unable to cope in mainstream. Teaching assistants are used well to help students to catch up following an absence or exclusion. Careers advice is good and the college has the quality standard for careers and guidance. All Year 10 students have an individual careers interview and Year 11 students have mock interviews with employers.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

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The new senior leadership team has re-energised the college by providing a clear vision, well identified priorities and a renewed drive to improve all aspects of provision. The college knows itself very well. A management re-structure and key new appointments have strengthened the leadership and management of the college at all levels. The senior leadership team work very well together and have a good range of complementary skills. Middle leaders work as an effective team. They are supported well by the senior team and are accountable for their areas. Improving teaching is a priority and this is being achieved through careful monitoring, well planned training and decisive action when other measures have failed. Governors have a good blend of expertise, know the strengths and weaknesses of the college and are not afraid to challenge the senior leaders. They are involved in strategic planning and set challenging targets for the college.

There is rigorous monitoring of performance and data are used very well by managers and staff to drive improvements. Challenging targets are set for both students and staff. Data are analysed by leaders and governors to ensure that no group of students persistently underperforms. The college promotes equal opportunity effectively throughout its work, but particularly through the personal, social, health and citizenships (PSHCE) curriculum. Safeguarding procedures are good. Thornhill serves two distinct communities and this is often reflected in unstructured or social situations in college. There is much work still to be done to improve community cohesion. The college finances are healthy, resources are good and outcomes for students are good and improving. Value for money is good.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## **Views of parents and carers**

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from just less than 40% of parents and carers. Over 60% of these were entirely positive in their views of the college. Almost all thought the college prepared their children well for the future and the vast majority said that teaching is good and their child is making enough progress. The major concern, shared by around a sixth of parents and carers who responded, was about behaviour, which inspectors found to be good both in lessons and around the college.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Community Science College At Thornhill to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 184 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 661 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	32	110	60	10	5	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	46	25	120	65	9	5	5	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	66	36	106	58	12	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	36	101	55	12	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	58	32	112	61	10	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	30	98	53	23	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	24	108	59	20	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	51	28	112	61	6	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	29	114	62	11	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	36	84	46	19	10	9	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	21	114	62	19	10	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	49	27	111	60	12	7	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	36	97	53	12	7	4	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Community Science College at Thornhill, Dewsbury, WF12 0HE

Thank you for welcoming us to the college. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views during the inspection. Thornhill has improved rapidly since the last inspection and is now good. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- The work we saw in lessons and the robust monitoring data kept by the college show that standards are around average and that you are making good progress.
- Teaching is good. Lessons move at a lively pace and you participate well. Teachers are skilled at asking questions that make you think and lessons include a variety of activities that keep you busy.
- The curriculum is satisfactory. You have a wide range of choices in Key Stage 4 and there are lots of enrichment and extra curricular activities. However, not all departments in the college are doing enough to develop your literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills.
- Your behaviour has improved and is now good and attendance is above average. You have a good approach to staying healthy and keeping safe. You contribute well to the life of the college and to the community.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are good.

In order to improve further we have asked the college to:

- use assessment more effectively to improve learning
- ensure that all subjects help to develop your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- take a more active role in promoting community cohesion.

The headteacher and his team have worked extremely hard and effectively to improve the college and they know exactly what needs to be done to make it even better. We hope that you will give them your full support and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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