

# Samuel Whitbread Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109670
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337350
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Alder 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>	13–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1696
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	409
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Clare Morris
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Robson (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Shefford Road Clifton Shefford
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 629900
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<b>Email address</b>	info@swcc.beds.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The large majority of time was spent looking at learning; 37 lessons were observed and 37 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, a group of governors and with members of the teaching staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to the safeguarding of students, the progress students are making in their learning, the school's own evaluation of its work, the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, the 208 parental questionnaires that were received by the end of the inspection, as well as the questionnaires completed by a sample of 797 students and 58 staff.

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

- the progress made by students in their learning
- the quality of teaching
- students' attendance
- the quality of improvement planning.

## Information about the school

The school serves a predominantly rural area and its students come from a widespread area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds; very few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average although the school has a centre for students with Asperger's Syndrome. Its specialism is engineering and it is a training school. In 2009, it established a trust with ten other local schools with the aim of improving standards. The school has the Artsmark award and Healthy Schools Status. There are some areas of the school where the recruitment of teachers is a difficulty.

Part-time nursery education and childcare for children aged from two- to four-years-old is provided on the school's site. This provision is managed by the governing body and was inspected at the same time as the school.

**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?**

**3**

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

**3**

### Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. It is beginning to emerge from a period of decline. This is the result of rigorous actions taken by the principal and other leaders, based on thorough and detailed evaluations of the school's work. Far reaching changes have been implemented and some robust actions have been taken. Some benefits of these are already evident while others, such as the establishment of a trust with other schools in the area, are of more long-term significance. The principal is well supported and ably challenged by a very knowledgeable, well-organised and active governing body.

Since the previous inspection, the school's examination results have continued to improve. However, they have not improved at as fast a rate as they have nationally. As a result, the school's examination results are no longer significantly better than those nationally, though they were at the time of the previous inspection. The evidence from the 2009 GCSE results, more recent externally set and marked tests in GCSE science and mathematics, and from observations of students' learning during the inspection, show that there is now an improving picture. The improvement began with English, which is improving well. More recently, there has been improvement in science, and improvement is now also underway in mathematics. In all three subjects, the progress being made by students is improving. This demonstrates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Improvements are occurring for four main reasons.

There has been a determined effort to develop the skills of those who have significant leadership responsibilities, for example subject leaders. There is a thorough means for monitoring the impact of their work and evaluations are rigorous. They are used to identify where further support is needed but are also a means of holding those with responsibilities to account. However, the efficiency of this is reduced by the fact that improvement plans lack measurable targets and there is not an indication of how much progress is expected by various times. This makes the assessment of progress sometimes difficult and means that it is not always evident when any further interventions are needed.

The curriculum has been radically overhauled so that it caters more for the wide range of students' abilities and interests. There is now a good range of subjects available of both academic and vocational types.

There is an emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, which is currently satisfactory, although the range is from outstanding to inadequate.

There is now a strong system for identifying students who are underachieving, so that

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they are given support.

Underlying these improvements is a strong ethos which values students and is concerned to help them both academically and in their personal development. The school's leaders are aware that coming from a widely spread geographical area, students can be isolated. As a result, the traditional long lunchtime has been retained to allow social relationships between students time to develop and prosper. The school also arranges, and pays for, late transport two nights a week so that students are not deterred from taking part in extra curricular activities. The result is that there is a high participation rate in these activities, many of which have health benefits and help students' social development. Although students' attendance is average, there has nevertheless been some decline, which is receiving robust attention using a wide range of approaches. Students' personal development is good.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so none is inadequate and more is good or outstanding by identifying areas of underperformance and ensuring that all necessary steps are taken to bring about improvement.
  - Raise students' attainment by ensuring that students of all abilities are helped to improve if they are underachieving.
  - Increase students' attendance rates and reduce the proportion who are persistently absent, by robustly implementing the full range of measures available.
  - Ensure that all plans for improvement have measurable targets which allow progress to be regularly monitored, so that adjustments can be made to the improvement process where necessary.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**3**

The standards reached by students by the end of Year 11 are in line with national averages and this means that students make satisfactory progress in relation to their Year 6 test results. This applies to all groups and is evident from the school's examination results as well as observations and scrutinies of students' work carried out during the inspection. Standards have risen since the last inspection, but not as quickly as nationally. This position is now improving. In addition, in recent years, the most able have not made the progress they should. However, this group is now performing satisfactorily.

The school is a calm place. Students move around it sensibly. Behaviour is good and students often reveal a good willingness to learn. Indeed in two lessons observed, they made better progress than the quality of teaching suggested they would, because their

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own resourcefulness and motivation enabled them to do so. They are well aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and an impressive proportion of students adds to the recommended two hours of physical education they receive by taking part in extra-curricular sporting activities. Students are given responsibility which they exercise in a mature way. For example, they contribute well to the community, having been involved in decisions about the curriculum and the design of the school uniform. While preparations for their future economic well-being are satisfactory, there are some good features. For example, some older students, who have shown an interest in teaching, help pupils in lower and middle schools with their learning, and students benefit from the good advice they are given on careers and future educational possibilities. However, the development of literacy and numeracy are both average. The questionnaires from both parents and students indicate that students' enjoyment of school is good.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<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>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory, it varies from outstanding to inadequate. The pace of lessons is always at least satisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well

<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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and their relationships with students are good. In an outstanding history lesson, the use made by the teacher of information about students' abilities was outstanding and enabled them to be fully challenged. In two good science lessons, the interactions between teachers and individual students were used well to develop their learning and revealed the teachers' good understanding of the students' capabilities. In all these lessons, there was good support for students with widely varying levels of attainment. However, provision of this quality is the exception rather than the norm. In some lessons, too little use is made of assessment information. The quality of questioning is very variable too. It is not used sufficiently to assess students' understanding so that the teaching can be adapted to correct misconceptions. In general, there are too few opportunities for students to develop the skills of independent and collaborative working. The marking of students' work is not consistent in providing good information to show them how to improve their work.

The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences and opportunities and caters well for the diverse interests and abilities of students. It has been developed in consultation with students and they are able to choose from an extensive range of GCSE subjects, vocational diplomas and young apprenticeships. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, as well as enrichment activities provided during the school day. The school's engineering specialism is influential in training teachers in the use of information and communication technology in teaching. Engineering-related subjects are well represented in the curriculum.

Students say there is little bullying and that it is dealt with effectively. They are well supported in the period when they are joining the school from their middle schools. There is careful monitoring of the progress and welfare of vulnerable students and good provision of counsellors for those who need professional advice. Good provision is made for any students who are withdrawn from lessons, for example because of behaviour difficulties, to ensure that they do not fall behind, especially in literacy and numeracy. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding arrangements were good and students were well aware of what they should do should there be someone present on site who is not wearing an identity badge to show that they have been through the school's vetting procedure. Good use has been made of outside expertise in helping students to be safe. For example, a community police officer spoke to students about the dangers of bullying through the internet, as well as other risks from it.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong commitment from leaders to bring about improvement. Their work is beginning to show success. A major initiative has been to develop a central means of tracking students' progress. This is resulting in the identification and subsequent well-judged targeting of students who require further help in their work. The school's leaders recognise the importance of this, but are also well aware of the desirability to reduce the need for such interventions by increasing the proportion of good or better teaching. To that end, the quality of teaching is systematically monitored. The school's judgment of teaching is now rigorous. The local authority has assisted to good effect in developing this expertise. Leaders' lesson observations are used to develop detailed areas for improvement for each teacher. Good strategies are used to help bring about improvement, such as coaching from expert practitioners. This is helping to improve quality. The emphasis on improvement is sustained by frequent meetings to establish what progress is being made. This is also used well to establish and culture of accountability.

The school's leaders are effective in the promotion of equality and the tackling of discrimination. Governors and leaders play a significant role in embedding ambition, and ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective.

A detailed audit of community cohesion has been completed which has resulted in good planning to address the issues. There is good work in this area, including good practical links with a school in Africa. The impact of this work is not fully established in terms of students' improved knowledge and understanding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</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>3</b>



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Excellent relationships between staff and children help their enjoyment of learning and independence. Children cooperate well and share with one another, for example one child involved in a counting game said to another, 'It's your turn now.' Children's learning and well-being are promoted by experienced and appropriately qualified staff. Detailed policies and procedures ensure that children are protected and well-supported. The nursery meets the requirements for registration. The leadership focuses well on improvement and ensuring that children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Self-evaluation is generally accurate. The accommodation meets the needs of all children, but a lack of cover for the outdoor space can inhibit the extent of outdoor learning activities.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Sixth form

Students' progress in their learning over the last three years has been broadly satisfactory. Progress has been better in Year 13 than in Year 12. There have been some cases, in the past, of students following courses for which they were not best suited. The school's leaders are beginning to improve the position in Year 12 and to identify subjects in which students' performance is relatively weak and take action to bring about improvements. The curriculum has now been extended and offers a wide range of courses.

Students enjoy the sixth form, and the proportion that stays on from Year 12 to Year 13 is high. Students' attendance and punctuality are good. There are excellent relationships between staff and students. The sixth form provides a good transition from school life to work or further and higher education because of the independence it encourages in students. Leaders have identified subjects in which students' performance is relatively weak and are taking strong and concerted actions, based upon good evaluations, to bring about improvements.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## **Views of parents and carers**

A high proportion of the parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that their child enjoys school and that they are safe. Inspectors agree. The areas of greatest concern for the parents who submitted the questionnaire are to do with how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and how well it takes account of parents' comments. Inspectors found no evidence that behaviour is anything less than good at the school.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Samuel Whitbread Community College 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 208 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1696 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	26	130	63	16	8	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	48	23	140	67	12	6	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	24	109	52	40	19	6	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	25	102	49	37	18	9	4
The teaching is good at this school	36	17	115	55	31	15	8	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	20	105	50	46	22	8	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	14	114	55	43	21	6	3
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	25	104	50	24	12	9	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	24	102	49	31	15	11	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	19	99	48	32	15	13	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	17	99	48	44	21	10	5
The school is led and managed effectively	52	25	104	50	28	13	12	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	28	102	49	27	13	13	6

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.**



5 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Samuel Whitbread Community College, Shefford, SG17 5QS

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We spoke to a good number of you, in meetings and in lessons. Some of you also came to speak to us on your own initiative. We found your comments helpful and we were impressed by your confidence and maturity.

We have found that your school is satisfactory with some good features. It is also an improving school. We were most impressed by your own personal development, your enjoyment of school and the extent to which you take advantage of what it offers. A lot of you take part in extra-curricular activities, for example, or help your school and other students in some way.

The progress you make in your work is satisfactory. This too is improving. The principal and other leaders are strongly committed to improving this further and have taken some significant actions to do so.

In order to improve further we have suggested to your school's leaders that the following should be done:

- improve the quality of teaching so none is inadequate and more is good or outstanding
- raise your attainment by ensuring that students of all abilities are helped to improve if they are underachieving
- increase your attendance rates and reduce the proportion who are persistently absent, by robustly implementing the full range of measures available
- ensure that all plans for improvement have measurable targets so that progress can be better monitored.

You can help by trying to attend as regularly as possible.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector

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