

# The Community College, Bishop's Castle

## Inspection report

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|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 123564            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Shropshire        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 340369            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 26–27 May 2010    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Michael Smith 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>                 | 11–18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form         | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 608   |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 65  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                            |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Dr Anne Maclachlan                            |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mr Terry Hunt                                 |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 12 November 2006                              |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Brampton Road<br>Bishops Castle<br>Shropshire |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01588 638257                                  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01588 630234                                  |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | college@cocobc.org                            |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 11–18          |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They visited 33 lessons and observed 33 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and members of the governing body. They observed the college's work and looked at minutes of meeting of the governing body, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, subject evaluations, and college action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 225 parent and carer questionnaires, 45 staff questionnaires and 386 student questionnaires.

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

- how effective the specialist areas have been in improving the quality of teaching and learning
- how well leaders, at all levels, have ensured rigour in evaluations to bring about improvements
- how effective the support for the English department has been in raising standards.

## Information about the school

The Community College is a smaller than average college which serves a sparsely populated rural area of Shropshire and parts of Powys. A significant proportion of its students have previously attended Welsh primary schools. The college is a hub of the community, providing cultural, educational and sporting facilities for children as well as for students and adults. The proportions of students known to be eligible for free school meals and with special education needs and/or disabilities are below average. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The college became a humanities specialist school in September 2008. At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent through illness.

**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?**

**4**

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

**4**

### Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the leadership of the college at all levels to ensure the strategic direction and ambition is understood and shared by all staff.

The college provides a satisfactory standard of education. Standards are average, demonstrating satisfactory progress for all students. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good and outstanding practice. Pastoral care is good with very good support for students with special education needs and/or disabilities and for students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. However, support for students' learning is less well developed and is inconsistent across different subjects. This inconsistency is evident in many aspects of the college's provision. This is because there are weaknesses in leadership across all levels. Staff are not aware of the college priorities and do not share the college's drive and ambition. As a result, staff feel let down, leaders feel that staff are not always prepared to take on the initiatives and, hence, there is an atmosphere of frustration and confusion. Significant concerns about leadership were also raised by staff and parents and carers in their questionnaire responses.

The college's self-evaluation is overgenerous as it does not always consider the impact of the provision upon outcomes. Monitoring, which was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, still lacks consistent rigour. Marking, which was also identified as needing improvement, still does not consistently provide students with information on how well they are doing, where they have made errors and how to improve. These aspects, along with a lack of strategic direction for the college, demonstrate an inadequate capacity to improve. The specialist status has made a good impact upon improving standards within the specialist subjects of geography, history and religious education. However, the college has not yet enabled the good, and at times excellent, teaching in these subjects to be routinely shared across other curriculum areas.

The majority of students enjoy college and attendance is very high. They make a good contribution to the life of the local community as well as being able to influence aspects within their own college. During the inspection, students were courteous and the behaviour observed was generally good. However, students, staff and parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour in their questionnaires and this was often, but not solely, linked to lessons which were taught by temporary staff. Relationships

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between staff and students are strong and students respond well in lessons to some good questioning. Lessons are generally planned to incorporate work at three levels but these differing levels rarely mean that students start at different points. Hence, too often work is matched to the middle of a class. Lower-attaining students are well supported but higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged, and at times they become complacent and are content to work at an overly relaxed pace. As a result, progress is not as good as it could be. As one parent said, reflecting the views of others, 'Insufficient challenges. Too willing to settle for mediocrity.'

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

- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels to ensure that:
  - there is a clear strategic direction and ambition which is understood and shared by all staff
  - staff are empowered and supported to bring about the necessary improvements and they take responsibility for improving their own practice
  - monitoring accurately identifies the strengths and areas for further improvement based upon secure evidence and is then used to effectively disseminate good practice and hold staff to account.
- Raise the quality of teaching and increase the pace of learning by ensuring:
  - a greater challenge in lessons
  - that assessment information is used effectively to plan work which is matched to students' abilities and thus raise aspirations
  - marking consistently informs students how well they are achieving, identifying errors and advising them how to improve.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Students start at college with standards which are broadly average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have fallen over the last three years from above average and are now average. The college's tracking information indicates that the downward trend has been halted and results are now improving, as are standards in English. Over time, students generally make satisfactory progress. This is confirmed by observations of lessons during the inspection. In lessons, students are engaged in their learning and many were taking part in interesting revision sessions. Some were attending voluntarily. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. However, at times some higher-attaining students are allowed to work at their own pace rather than being challenged and for these, while they are achieving satisfactorily, staff, parents and students are aware that they are capable of much more.

Students feel safe. There have been very few incidents of racially motivated behaviour and the college takes responsibility for ensuring students fully understand the implications of racial harmony. Behaviour observed was generally good but, at times,

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students do not take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour can be poor, hence it is judged satisfactory overall. The rare incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with. Students have a good understanding of moral issues. They know how to live healthily and many take up extra-curricular sport and other fitness activities. However, students noted that this is an area in which the college could do more to ensure they lead healthier lives.

Good social development enables students to make an effective contribution to the college and wider community. This includes completing surveys regarding the quality of teaching within the college. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Themed days, like the discovery days, are used effectively to enhance students' good cultural understanding, and there are well attended musical and dramatic events and clubs. Students take part in a variety of work-related activities and experiences which, along with effective key skills, prepare them well for their futures.

*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:<br>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>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>3</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>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 1        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>2</b> |

**How effective is the provision?**

There are many good areas within the college's provision but they do not have sufficient

<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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impact on students' progress or in raising standards. This is often because of inconsistencies between departments, and also due to whole-college initiatives not being fully embedded. Students are able to follow a wide variety of courses in Key Stage 4. These include appropriate vocational courses, including diploma courses at other schools. While the courses on offer ensure appropriate qualifications for students, the day-to-day delivery of the curriculum does not include a wide variety of exciting lessons to challenge and engage students. The curriculum is enhanced through a variety of additional educational experiences. Students enjoy a good range of extra-curricular activities that include sport and the performing arts. However, students have limited opportunities for physical education and information and communication technology lessons in Key Stage 4.

Students know their targets and, in some lessons, assessment is used effectively to match target grades with students' current working levels, the examination grade descriptors and what students need to do to meet their target. However, this is not consistent across departments. Subject knowledge is a strength in many lessons when taught by specialists but sometimes less secure when lessons are taught by non-specialists.

The strong pastoral care ensures students are well supported across a variety of areas. Year 7 students say they were prepared well for college prior to arriving and then supported effectively when they started in September. In other year groups, students spoke well on how they were prepared for the next phase of their education.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>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>3</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

There are weaknesses in the leadership of the college at all levels. While the very large majority of staff said in their responses to the questionnaire that they are proud to work at the college, a majority also mentioned concerns about leadership. This has meant that the drive and ambition to improve has not been shared by staff and, consequently, areas identified for improvement in the previous report have not been systematically rectified. There have been a number of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching but their impact has been limited and they have not become embedded. There are strengths in management across the college but this is often at an individual level and good practice is not always shared. Many members of the governing body are relatively recent appointments. They support the college and have appropriate structures in place and

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their evaluations are becoming rigorous; consequently, they challenge the college from an informed viewpoint. They have ensured the college has good safeguarding procedures and deals quickly with any identified issues.

The analysis of examination data and identification of underperforming groups have supported the college in ensuring satisfactory equality of opportunity, which is why English results have improved. The college works well within the local community and through its specialist humanities status. The study of religious education at GCSE has ensured students have a better understanding of how they fit into a multi-cultural Britain, including visiting cities to observe different cultural backgrounds. There are also a variety of links with overseas areas, for example, South Africa.

Given that the college delivers a satisfactory standard of education, it also demonstrates satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 4        |
| <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>3</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>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>3</b> |

## Sixth form

The standards attained by students are broadly average. Students make satisfactory progress from their starting points in the sixth form. Teachers' good subject knowledge and very good relationships are strengths of lessons. However, there are limited opportunities to challenge students and extend their learning. The tracking system to monitor the progress of students is in its early stage of implementation and, consequently, guidance and support for students at risk of underperforming are not always timely. The curriculum has improved so that it now offers a good range of A-level courses, together with a small number of vocational courses. However, the college



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recognises it needs to provide a greater range of GCSE and equivalent courses.

The positive ethos ensures students enjoy their studies. They receive well-structured guidance both prior to entry into the sixth form and for their futures. Students are conscientious and hard working, with many offering support in lessons or providing individual help to younger students. As such, they provide positive role models in the college.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is a strong focus on improving students' performance. However, this is limited by a lack of involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of the provision and in the preparation of the subsequent improvement plan. Given the small number of students, the sixth form does well to provide satisfactory value for money.

*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    | 3        |

**Views of parents and carers**

Views from parents and carers were generally positive with many commenting on how pleased they are with the college. However, a significant proportion of the responses identified concern about the standard of behaviour, the lack of challenge and weaknesses in leadership of the college. A number also identified concern that their child did not do as well as they should because classes were disrupted by staff absence. The inspection team investigated all these issues and agreed with the concerns raised by parents. Leadership and lack of challenge are areas of improvement for the college, and while all behaviour observed during the inspection was good, comments made in all three sets of questionnaires meant that behaviour was judged satisfactory and not good.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Community College, Bishop's Castle 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 225 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 608 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly Agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 61             | 27 | 139   | 62 | 19       | 8  | 4                 | 2 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 59             | 26 | 150   | 67 | 6        | 3  | 3                 | 1 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 50             | 22 | 140   | 62 | 33       | 15 | 1                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 52             | 23 | 126   | 56 | 34       | 15 | 7                 | 3 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 44             | 20 | 133   | 59 | 30       | 13 | 4                 | 2 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 25             | 11 | 134   | 60 | 50       | 22 | 8                 | 4 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 28             | 12 | 147   | 65 | 36       | 16 | 3                 | 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) | 35             | 16 | 133   | 59 | 32       | 14 | 3                 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 37             | 16 | 137   | 61 | 33       | 15 | 4                 | 2 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 30             | 13 | 124   | 55 | 44       | 20 | 13                | 6 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 31             | 14 | 132   | 59 | 35       | 16 | 5                 | 2 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 32             | 14 | 123   | 55 | 43       | 19 | 13                | 6 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 50             | 22 | 136   | 60 | 28       | 12 | 3                 | 1 |

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

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 51  | 45   | 0            | 4          |
| Primary schools      | 6   | 41   | 42           | 10         |
| Secondary schools    | 8   | 34   | 44           | 14         |
| Sixth forms          | 10  | 37   | 50           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 32  | 38   | 25           | 5          |
| Pupil referral units | 12  | 43   | 31           | 14         |
| All schools          | 9   | 40   | 40           | 10         |

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.**



1 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Community College, Bishop's Castle,  
Shropshire, SY9 5AY

When I visited your college recently with my colleagues, we met some of you at lunchtime, and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were impressed with your friendliness and helpfulness and how well you behaved around the college, although we were made aware that some of you do not always behave so well, especially when you have a different teacher. This is an area you can help your college improve. We agree with those of you who told us that you felt safe in college and we were pleased at how very high your attendance is. The work you do as a humanities specialist college gives you opportunities to learn about different cultures and you also make a good contribution to the local community.

Standards in GCSE examinations and A level are average and we judged that the college delivers a satisfactory standard of education. However, we have concerns about how well leadership, at all levels, brings about improvements. As a result, we have judged that your college requires a 'notice to improve'. This means that the college will be inspected again in about a year. We have also asked the college to improve the quality of teaching so that lessons always challenge you and you learn more. This is particularly for those of you who find work easy and do not always get stretched. This is an area you can really help your college with by ensuring that you do not settle for anything other than your best.

Staff care for you well and make sure you are prepared for the next stage of your education, including staying in college for A levels, going to university or to work. Lessons are satisfactory and often good, but in order to improve the quality of teaching, we have also asked your college to ensure assessment information is used well to match the work to your abilities and that marking informs you how well you are doing and how to improve. Again, this is an area where your cooperation will help the college make the necessary changes by making sure you act upon the advice given when your work is marked.

Your assistant headteachers worked well with us during the inspection and they now have a clear understanding of what needs to be done. I wish you well in this college,

which many of you told us is very supportive, and ask you to do all you can to help and support your teachers.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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