

# Frome Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123862
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	340445
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sanderson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1409
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	390
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Vincent
<b>Principal</b>	Wendy Missons
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Bath Road Frome BA11 2HQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 39 part-lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work, and looked at the college's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents, students' books, 132 parental questionnaires, staff and student questionnaires

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

- the effectiveness of action being taken to raise standards in Years 9 to 11, particularly in mathematics, and in the sixth form
- whether teaching is consistently good across the college
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels to raise standards and reduce the variation in achievement between different subjects.

## Information about the school

Frome Community College is a larger than average secondary school. Around one quarter of its students are in the sixth form. Most students are of White British heritage and the number of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below that found in most schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The college has a resource base for students with language and communication difficulties. The college achieved specialist status in Media Arts in 2002. It shares many facilities with the local community including the Merlin Theatre, the leisure centre and the Little Oaks Nursery. The nursery is local authority managed.

**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

Frome Community College provides a satisfactory education for its students and is an improving school. It has a very welcoming, inclusive ethos and the care, guidance and support staff provide for students is outstanding. Students enjoy school and relationships between staff and students are very positive. The behaviour of students both in lessons and around the college is excellent and students are prepared to rise to the challenges set for them in lessons, when they are provided. Students say they feel very safe in college and that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they do occur, are quickly dealt with. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above the national average.

Despite these strengths, the overall effectiveness of the college is judged satisfactory because standards at the end of Year 11 are average and students make satisfactory progress in their learning. The new principal recognises that standards could be higher particularly in mathematics. During the last year, strategies to raise standards have been developed well. Target-setting procedures and systems to track students' progress have been improved. More effective use is being made of data to hold middle leaders accountable for students' progress. These developments are making a difference and standards are beginning to rise in mathematics and across the college. However, these new systems are not yet fully embedded.

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with instances of good practice. Where lessons are effective, students gain from challenging tasks that are suited to their needs and they enjoy working together. However, this is not always the case. There is not enough good or better teaching with suitably challenging work to ensure that standards have risen fast enough or consistently enough since the last inspection. The quality of teachers' assessment is inconsistent. Although students are generally aware of their targets, they are not always clear about what they need to do to improve. The college has recently developed its strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These are beginning to bear fruit and the quality of teaching is starting to improve. However, variation in the quality of teaching and the progress made by students between different subjects is still evident in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form.

The college provides a good curriculum that is responsive to students' needs. A strength of the curriculum is its flexibility and the increasing number of options available at Key Stage 4. This has been facilitated in part by the college's specialist status. The impact of specialist status in media arts can also be seen across the college in providing resources that enhance learning in lessons and providing opportunities for students to develop their self-confidence.

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The positive impact of leadership and management in the college is evident in the improvement in attendance and students' behaviour since the last inspection. However, actions taken since the previous inspection to improve teaching and learning and standards in the college have been less effective. Systems of self-evaluation are robust and the new principal has a good understanding of the strengths of the college and the areas in need of improvement. She has put in place good plans to address these areas of weakness and improvements are beginning to be seen. Most curriculum team leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although their effectiveness in driving up standards is not consistent. The college has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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

- Embed assessment practices in teaching and learning so that all teachers:
- use assessment information to match learning opportunities to students' needs
- evaluate students' progress in lessons and give them clear feedback about their next learning steps
- help students develop the skills of self-assessment through regular opportunities to evaluate their work in lessons
- provide students with opportunities to develop their independent learning skills through activities that actively engage them in their learning.
- Focus all curriculum team leaders on accelerating progress by ensuring:
- consistency in the use of assessment information to track students' progress and challenge underperformance
- that lessons are clearly focused on challenging learning outcomes for students.

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

Although students made good progress in a number of lessons observed during this inspection, in the majority of lessons progress was satisfactory. Due to this satisfactory quality of teaching, students make satisfactory progress over time. They enter the college in Year 9 with standards similar to the national average. By the end of Year 11, the standards they attain in external examinations remain broadly average. The college has not attained its challenging statutory or specialist school targets in recent years. Standards in mathematics were low at the time of the last inspection and Year 11 examination results in 2009 indicate that this remains the case. However, lessons observed during this inspection and the college's tracking data indicate that standards are now rising in this subject area. All groups of students make similar progress with the exception of those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students, including those in the resource base, make good progress due to the well-targeted support they receive.

Students are developing personal skills very well and are maturing into sensible, considerate young people. This, coupled with their good teamworking skills, is preparing them well for the world of work. The college has a very welcoming ethos and students

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get on well with each other. Students, including those who are vulnerable, feel very safe in the college and adopt safe ways of working in practical subjects. The opportunities for students to take responsibility in the college are numerous and varied, and they are ready volunteers. There are active college and sixth form councils that are effective in making a difference. The college's specialism in media arts also plays an important role in ensuring that the college is at the heart of the local community. Students are informed about how to live a healthy lifestyle and the canteen offers a range of healthy foods. However, students do not always choose to eat healthily and there is only a satisfactory level of participation in after- school sporting activities.

*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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</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>1</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: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

In all the lessons seen during this inspection, there were good relationships between teachers and students. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to give clear explanations. Students listen well during lessons and willingly become involved in activities. In the best lessons, activities were pitched at a level so that they were challenging for all students in the class. A good range of activities were used that

<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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interested and engaged students and actively involved them in their learning. However, in the majority of lessons, teachers tended to talk for too long and used a limited range of teaching strategies. Questions often required one- or two-word answers and did not thoroughly explore and develop students' understanding. Not all teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan and deliver lessons that effectively build on students' prior learning. The result is that work is too often pitched at the middle of the class with insufficient challenge for all students. Too few opportunities are also provided for students to find things out for themselves, and to self-assess their work, and this means that their independent learning skills are not being well developed. Most students know their targets but they are less clear about what they have to do to meet them. The leadership team is aware of this issue and has recently introduced a whole-college strategy to better inform students of the next steps in their learning.

The inclusive nature of the college is demonstrated through the way that the curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed to ensure that it meets the needs and interests of all students. There is a very wide range of both academic and vocational courses available to students in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. However, the quality of the courses varies and there are differences in students' achievement across the curriculum. The college's media arts specialism has been effective in helping the college to broaden the range of courses that it offers. It has also enabled strong links to be developed with a range of partners in the local community who help deliver aspects of the curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of enrichment activities that positively contribute to students' good personal development.

Students make a smooth transfer into the college in Year 9 due to the good transition arrangements that are in place. The pastoral team in the school is very strong and staff know and care for students extremely well. As a result, students feel that there is always someone they can turn to for advice and they speak positively about the support they are given. Very effective steps have been taken to improve both behaviour and attendance since the last inspection. Staff work very well with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable students are provided with excellent support. Students with language and communication difficulties are provided with extremely effective specialised support. The guidance given to students regarding future course and career options is very good.

*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>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

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

The good leadership of the new principal, ably supported by the vice principals and an increasingly effective senior leadership team, is beginning to bring about improvements to teaching and learning and students' progress. Systems for self-evaluation are robust and have led to an accurate evaluation of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The principal has drawn up good plans for improvement and introduced new structures for the line management of middle leaders, leading to clear lines of accountability. However, these are new structures and they are not yet fully embedded or effective. Although some curriculum team leaders have been successful in implementing plans and driving improvement, this is not consistently the case in all subject areas. Variability in the quality of teaching and students' achievement across the college still needs to be fully addressed.

Safeguarding procedures in the college are very secure. Child protection procedures are fully in place and the college works extremely well with a wide range of professionals to safeguard and support students. Checks on staff are robust and fully meet government requirements.

The college makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. It has only recently carried out an audit of its work in this area and developed a plan to further promote community cohesion and monitor the impact of its actions. The college has very strong links with its local community and its work as in international school supports students' global understanding. However, more could be done by the college to promote students' understanding of the diversity of faiths, ethnicities and cultures found within Britain.

The governors play an influential role in determining the strategic direction of the college. Good monitoring procedures are in place and so they are kept well informed about the quality of provision and students' outcomes. This enables them to provide senior leaders with effective support and challenge.

*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>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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>
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## Sixth form

Sixth form students display a mature attitude to their work and are good role models for the rest of the college. They enter the sixth form with standards similar to those seen nationally and by the end of Year 13 standards are broadly average. There was a decline in standards between 2006 and 2008 but this trend was reversed in 2009.

This was in part due to improved systems for tracking students' progress and tackling underperformance. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory enabling students to make sound progress. However, inconsistencies in practice across the college results in too much variation in students' achievement between subjects. Students benefit from a good curriculum that offers them a wide range of academic and vocational choices and a broad range of enrichment opportunities including clubs, conferences and visits. There are also a number of opportunities for students to take on responsibility such as the active sixth form council. Students appreciate the good advice they receive throughout their time in the sixth form and in particular regarding their entry into higher education.

*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

Just over 1 in 10 registered parents or carers at the college returned a questionnaire. A number of parents/carers of students in Year 9 did not feel they were able to answer all of the questions as their son or daughter had only been at the college for three weeks. The very large majority of questionnaires received from parents/carers were supportive of the college. Some parents raised a concern about how the college deals with unacceptable behaviour. However, inspectors judged that students' behaviour in lessons and around the college was excellent.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Frome 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 132 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1409 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	37	69	52	8	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	27	80	61	5	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	19	80	61	10	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	26	73	55	8	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	31	24	87	66	1	1	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	17	70	53	18	14	7	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	15	74	56	23	17	3	2
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)	34	26	70	53	10	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	25	74	56	10	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	16	65	49	18	14	6	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	11	79	60	15	11	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	17	13	86	65	12	9	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	31	79	60	8	6	1	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 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.**



25 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Frome Community College, Frome, BA11 2HQ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your college recently.

We very much enjoyed our discussions with you. Now that we have finished the inspection, we wanted to let you know our findings.

Your college provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. It is improving and has a number of important strengths. The following points are the key strengths of the college.

- The college has a welcoming, inclusive ethos. You all get on well with each other and your behaviour in lessons and around the college site is excellent.
- The very large majority of you enjoy school. Your attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above the national average.
- You are extremely well cared for and supported by staff. This ensures that you feel very safe in the college.
- You make the most of the many opportunities to take on roles of responsibility, such as becoming involved in the active college or sixth form council. Many of you also become involved in local community events.
- The college provides you with a very wide range of academic and vocational courses that are tailored to meet your particular needs and interests.
- You have all benefited from the college's specialism in media arts.

The standards you reach at the end of Year 11 and the sixth form are broadly average.

In order to increase the progress you make in lessons and raise standards to above average, we have asked the leadership team to make a couple of important improvements. In some of your lessons, teachers provide all of you with tasks that are challenging and engaging and actively involve you in learning. In these lessons, you make good progress. We have asked the leadership team to make sure that more of your lessons are like this. We have also asked them to work closely with subject leaders to reduce the variation in progress you make between different subjects.

You can help to make these improvements by continuing to become actively involved in activities arranged for you by staff.

I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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