

# Ullswater Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112393
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	342860
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 June –1 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth James 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>	Foundation
<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>	1445
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	233
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nigel Pattinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	Wetheriggs Lane Penrith Cumbria CA11 8NG
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. 40 lessons were observed and 39 teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the governing body, staff and a local authority adviser. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including assessment and progress tracking data. Returns from 83 parental and carer questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the achievement of different groups of students, especially in Key Stage 4
- the effectiveness with which the curriculum matches the needs and aspirations of students, especially in Key Stage 4
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in raising achievement and the school's capacity to improve further
- the effectiveness of the marking of students' work in helping them to improve and reach higher standards.

## Information about the school

Ullswater Community College is a larger-than-average comprehensive school serving a large catchment area. The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low and few have a first language other than English. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The school holds business and enterprise specialist status. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average because the school is specifically resourced to provide for students experiencing physical/medical needs and students with severe and/or profound multiple learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main school is around the national average. The school holds Healthy Schools status and has been awarded the Sportsmark, Fair Trade Mark and the Inclusion Chartermark. At the last inspection in April 2009 the school was issued with a Notice to Improve because senior leaders were failing to ensure that significant improvements were being made in relation to students' achievement in most subjects in Key Stage 4 and in the way in which the curriculum met the needs and aspirations of a significant proportion of students.

**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**

**2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The new headteacher has taken firm and decisive action since September 2009, initiating wide-ranging improvements to bring the school to the point where it is now satisfactory and improving strongly. There are many good features, including care, guidance and support and aspects of leadership and management. The achievement of students is satisfactory but improving rapidly and securely, as a result of rigorous monitoring and tracking procedures and well-focused intervention strategies. The quality of teaching is improving and, occasionally, outstanding lessons were observed, but it is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that students are always challenged sufficiently to make good progress. The improved curriculum is having an impact on students' learning and progress. The school recognizes the need to develop the curriculum further, with more on-site vocational opportunities and more direction in option choices to ensure that courses chosen fit students' future aspirations.

Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are good and, on occasion, outstanding. Attendance is average. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted through the many sporting opportunities. Specialist status makes a valuable contribution to students' economic well-being, through enterprise activities. Achievement in mathematics, one of the school's specialist subjects, is very good. Support for students with a statement of special educational needs is a particular strength, helping to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

The school's self-evaluation was largely accurate in its judgements, although it underestimated the strength of aspects of leadership and management. The significant improvement that is taking place in students' achievement and in provision is the result of good leadership and management. The headteacher is instilling a culture of aspiration and raising expectations among staff and students. Better line management structures and a clear focus on accountability have strengthened middle leaders and capacity to improve is now good. Partnerships are a significant strength and have contributed well to the improved curriculum on offer. While the self-evaluation report provided much detail about the work being done to improve the school, it did not always include an evaluation of the impact on outcomes. Value for money is satisfactory.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons are good and outstanding by:

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- – using assessment data consistently to inform planning and ensure that appropriate challenge is provided for all groups of students
- – developing the use of information and communications technology in teaching and learning
- – improving the consistency with which policies, such as the marking policy, are implemented.
- Develop further and embed vocational opportunities within the school, including the sixth form, and ensure that students receive appropriate guidance so that they embark on courses in keeping with their ability and aspirations.
- Evaluate the impact of school improvement strategies and actions in order to improve outcomes for students.
- 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**

Students make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and, where teaching is good, progress is often better. Evidence from lesson observations shows that students have good attitudes to learning and engage well with the tasks they are set. The schools own assessment data, together with the results of GCSE examination modules, early entry examinations results and moderated coursework, indicate that attainment is broadly average and rising. Rates of progress are accelerating securely so that achievement is now satisfactory. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar satisfactory progress to their peers.

Students say that they feel safe around school, there is very little bullying and they have confidence that adults will sort out any difficulties. Behaviour in lessons is typically good and sometimes outstanding, but around school there are occasional instances of less considerate behaviour, particularly in narrow corridors.

There is a good uptake of extra-curricular activities including sports. The school council is active and students are involved in making improvements to school life. Students make good progress in mathematics and acquire a good understanding of the world of work through enterprise initiatives and work experience. Specialist status has also been used well to develop students' contribution to the community, for example, through links with primary schools. Social and moral development are strong, and assemblies, citizenship and religious education encourage students to reflect on ethical issues. Cultural development through arts and music is also promoted well, but understanding of other cultures less so.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<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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<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>2</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?**

Teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. No inadequate teaching was observed and there were occasional examples of outstanding teaching, as well as a reasonable proportion of good teaching. Where teaching is good, there are clear lesson objectives and lessons have both challenge and pace, with well managed activities. Such lessons are characterised by provision for all levels of ability in the class. Students often work effectively in pairs or in small groups and are involved in both peer and group assessments. Satisfactory lessons are characterised by lack of pace and limited challenge, particularly for the more-able students. Many of these lessons involve teacher directed whole-class teaching strategies. Information and communications technology (ICT) is a part of many lessons, but its use tends to be unsophisticated and often it does no more than could be achieved with a traditional whiteboard.

Although teachers have information about the level of attainment of students in their classes, there are inconsistencies between and within departments in the extent to which it is used effectively to inform planning. Students are aware of their targets but are not consistently able to articulate specifically what is required in order to progress to higher levels. Marking is carried out regularly, often making use of motivational comments. However, there are some inconsistencies across subject areas in terms of the information provided on the level being achieved and what specifically needs to be done to improve the standard of students' work.

Revisions to improve the curriculum at Key Stage 3 include the introduction of Access and Nurture Groups in Years 7 to 9 to meet the needs of students experiencing difficulties better. At Key Stage 4, a range of alternatives to GCSE is being developed,

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especially for the less-able students. Good use is made of 14 to 19 partnership arrangements to offer specific accredited vocational opportunities off site to small groups. There are some good examples of this work helping to re-engage students in danger of becoming disaffected. Within the school, vocational options, such as a science course and AS-level health and social care are now offered, but these are sometimes chosen by higher-ability students who would be better advised to take more academic courses to avoid limiting future opportunities. Early entry to GCSE English Language leads to some underachievement and the need for resits. Specific courses and pathways with a focus on workplace skills have been introduced where appropriate for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are good extra-curricular opportunities in a wide range of subject areas, including music and sports.

Care, guidance and support are strong and transition arrangements are highly effective. Good use is made of learning support assistants, for example, through attachment to Year 7 form groups in the autumn term, as well as for specific interventions.

Arrangements to support those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are a particular strength, leading to improved confidence and achievement.

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since his appointment in September 2009 the headteacher has provided exceptionally strong and effective leadership. He enthuses colleagues, who appreciate new opportunities for development and share his vision for the school. Clear lines of responsibility have been established, areas of weakness addressed and expectations raised. Although there has not yet been a full set of examination results, it is apparent from GCSE examination module results, early entries and inspection observations that standards and progress are improving strongly. This is a direct reflection of the good leadership and management that has been established across senior and middle leaders and managers. Leadership and management of teaching and learning are good. There have been considerable developments since the last inspection, for example, in the line management structure and accountability, and in monitoring procedures. Professional development has focused on improving learning and teaching and a specific group has been set up which meets regularly to encourage sharing of good practice. Students say that teaching has improved. However, the school does not systematically evaluate the impact of its actions on outcomes for students.

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The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. There are particular strengths in terms of the school and local community. Global links in Europe and further afield help promote understanding of different communities. However, work to develop understanding of diversity in Britain is more limited. Policies for safeguarding are in place and staff have received appropriate training. Arrangements for inter-agency working are effective. The school knows which of its pupils are most at risk and gives priority to safeguarding their welfare. The progress and attainment of different groups of students are monitored carefully, demonstrating the school's commitment to providing equality of opportunity.

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is good. There is a high turnout at events such as parents' and carers' evenings. The school uses a variety of methods to communicate with parents and carers, including text messaging and a regular newsletter. Partnerships are a strength. They include close links with other schools and colleges, through the local 14 to 19 partnership. Arrangements provide particularly strong support for students needing additional support through multi-agency work. Enterprise activities make a valuable contribution to students' development. There are good links with local businesses which benefit students. Governors are committed and provide appropriate support. They are becoming better informed about attainment and progress data, which will enable them to challenge the school effectively.

*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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</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>

## Sixth form

Attainment at GCE A level is about average but pass rates for AS levels are below average. Value added data indicate that students make satisfactory progress given their



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starting points. Systems for individual target setting based on prior attainment are in place. Assessment and tracking are thorough, with regular reviews of progress. Further refinements to the processes are planned. The guidance given to students about course choices is under review to ensure that students are placed on suitable courses with a high chance of success. Attendance in the sixth form is very good and a high proportion of students are retained from Year 12 to Year 13. The curriculum includes a range of advanced level courses and progression from Year 11 to these is good. The school is beginning to consider alternatives to advanced level provision, which would provide more opportunities for less-able students who want to continue their education at the school post 16. Leadership and management are strong and there is a drive for continuous improvement.

*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**

The proportion of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire was low at about 6%. Of those who did, the very large majority were very supportive of the school. A few parents and carers raised concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour in lessons is usually very good and the school's systems for managing behaviour generally work well. Interviews with students confirmed that this is the case. A very small minority of parents and carers do not feel the school helps them to support their children's learning. Several wrote individual comments saying that more information about their children's progress would be helpful. A few parents and carers do not agree that the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found that sporting opportunities are good. There were a number of individual concerns about school lunches. Inspectors found these to be at least partly justified. The school is planning to improve lunch arrangements during the next academic year.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ullswater 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1445 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	28	52	63	5	6	3	4
The school keeps my child safe	18	22	56	67	4	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	22	52	63	8	10	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	33	43	52	7	8	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	19	23	53	64	6	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	12	47	57	17	20	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	12	53	64	12	14	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)	17	20	54	65	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	20	57	69	7	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	14	51	61	12	14	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	11	56	67	6	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	23	28	42	51	6	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	24	52	63	6	7	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.**



02 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ullswater Community College, Penrith, CA11 8NG

Thank you for welcoming us recently. We found that your school no longer needs a notice to improve and is now satisfactory, with many good features.

Your new headteacher has brought about a series of improvements which are helping you to make better progress. You told us that lessons are more interesting this year and we agree that teaching is improving well. We have asked your headteacher to continue this work so that you are able to make even more rapid progress and achieve the best results possible. The staff need to do this by making better use of all the information they have about your attainment and progress in their planning, developing the way ICT is used to help you learn, and making sure that school policies, such as the marking policy, are followed.

More vocational opportunities have been introduced to give you a better choice of courses at Key Stage 4 and we have asked the school to look at improving this further, as well as making sure you understand exactly where these courses might lead. We were very pleased to see that your attitudes to work are good and you behave well in lessons. Many of you enjoy the good range of sporting and other extracurricular activities on offer. The school cares well for you, especially those of you with particular needs. Attendance is about average. Specialist status means that you are well prepared for working life, through enterprise activities and work experience. You make good progress in mathematics, which is also very important.

You can help with the improvements, which will help you gain good results, by attending school every day and continuing to work hard.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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