

Marsden Heights Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134990
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	360668
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Cathryn Kirby HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	706
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Ed Saville
Headteacher	Mr Mike Tull
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
School address	Edge End Lane Nelson Lancs BB9 0PR
Telephone number	01282 683060
Fax number	01282 683062
Email address	admin@marsdenheights.lancs.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Inspection number	360668

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 37 lessons taught by 37 teachers. Meetings were held with college leaders, groups of students, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the college's work, and looked at development plans, minutes of meetings, records of monitoring and evaluation, records of students' progress, college policies and students' work. In addition they looked at responses to questionnaires completed by students, staff and 16 parents and carers.

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

- How well strategies to tackle underachievement are improving outcomes for individuals and different groups of students.
- Whether the quality of teaching and students' progress is improving well in subjects where outcomes are weakest.
- The impact of leaders and managers in bringing about change quickly in the areas of work identified by the college as requiring greatest improvement.

Information about the school

This is smaller than the average secondary school. Almost all students come from the distinct communities of Brierfield or Nelson. The large majority of students are from Pakistani heritage. Around a fifth of students are White British. Most speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is substantially higher than average. Around a quarter of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In April 2010 the college moved into new purpose-built premises funded by the Building Schools for the Future initiative.

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

The college is satisfactory and improving well because leaders and managers channel their efforts to good effect. The headteacher has fostered a strong culture of teamwork and a relentless focus on raising achievement and narrowing attainment gaps. The college community has settled into the new state-of-the-art premises. Students and staff value the high quality accommodation and resources that support learning. Relationships are harmonious. The college welcomes visitors into an atmosphere of calm and purpose.

Students' attainment on entry is below average and often well below average in English. All groups of students now make at least satisfactory progress as a result of stronger teaching and a developing curriculum which better accommodates a variety of interests and needs. Consequently, the attainment of all groups is rising and some make good progress compared to similar groups nationally. In 2010, as a result of a more effective provision, the college reduced the variability in subject performance. Almost all students leaving Year 11 progress into education, employment or training.

Effective leadership and management have improved the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall but the proportion that is good or better is improving well. Teachers have good opportunities to develop their skills through, for example, coaching and observing colleagues' outstanding practice. This is contributing to high staff morale. Teaching is only satisfactory when too little use is made of assessment information in the classroom to match work to students' needs or when planning does not make best use of additional adults.

Good care, guidance and supports improving outcomes. Students enjoy college and feel well supported in their learning. In all respects their personal development is never less than satisfactory. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good, as are the contributions they make to college life or as citizens of the wider community.

High quality development plans identify appropriate actions to bring about improvement. In most aspects of the college's work, rigorous monitoring and evaluation lead to an accurate assessment of the impact of actions and ensure that improvement is sustained. A weaker aspect of monitoring is the checking of participation rates for different groups across the good range of extra-curricular activities and ensuring that information and communication technology (ICT) entitlement in Key Stage 4 is met.

Partnerships with social care services, educational institutions and other organisations contribute well to support students' learning and well-being. In particular, partnerships in the United Kingdom and abroad have a positive impact on community cohesion in the college and beyond. Engagement with parents and carers is stronger than the low return rate of inspection questionnaires would suggest. The large majority of parents and carers are satisfied with provision and outcomes and say that their children are safe at college.

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

The building momentum of college improvement and high impact in most areas of work characterise the pace of change. The college has good capacity at senior and middle leadership level and in many classrooms to sustain further improvement and provides satisfactory value for money.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the momentum in raising attainment and narrowing gaps between different groups of students by:
 - ensuring that teachers always use their knowledge of individuals' learning needs to refine tasks and deploy additional adults so that students make consistently good progress
 - intensifying support for the small group of teachers who would benefit from greater access to the college's effective professional development programme.
- Ensure that all students receive maximum benefit from the range of opportunities afforded through the developing curriculum by:
 - checking that all students in Key Stage 4 receive a sufficient amount of teaching in ICT
 - reviewing the rates and patterns of participation by different groups of students in the comprehensive programme of enrichment activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' achievement is satisfactory and improving well. A strengthening provision drives rising attainment. Although below average, the attainment of 16-year-olds is improving overall, especially in mathematics and most rapidly in English. Compared to national averages, attainment gaps are narrowing. Students known to be eligible for free school meals and those of Pakistani heritage, make better progress than similar groups nationally. White British students, particularly girls, now make satisfactory progress as a result of good support and new provision which better meets their needs. The special educational needs and/or disabilities of students are taken into account in all aspects of college planning to ensure that they make satisfactory progress.

The rate at which all students make progress in their learning is improving securely and quickly as a result of an increasing proportion of good and better teaching. In the best lessons, teachers develop students' literacy skills well and encourage self-reliance and personal responsibility for learning. Teachers' strong skills in facilitating learning are helping to engage disaffected and potentially vulnerable students. This contributes to their better attendance and accelerated progress in learning. Where progress is satisfactory rather than good, teachers are less skilled in using their knowledge of students' different skills and abilities to set appropriate learning tasks.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Students are considerate of one another and relationships with adults are generally good. Many students have a strong sense of responsibility and participate well in college life, for example, as representatives of their

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

tutor groups or houses. Students say they feel very safe in school. They know their views are listened to and that their contributions are valued. Many students select healthy eating options at lunchtime and participate in satisfactory levels of physical exercise. Participation in activities, such as public speaking in assemblies and regular group work, present good opportunities to apply the skills students will need to be successful in adult life.

Attendance is average. Students are socially aware young people, many of whom are able to reflect and consider issues from another's perspective in school and the wider world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. The proportion of lessons in which students make good progress is increasing and this is helping to quickly counter past underachievement. Features which characterise the most effective teaching are: teachers' strong subject knowledge; effective questioning to check understanding; skilled classroom management; high expectations of what students can achieve and good use of high quality resources. Inspectors observed teachers willing to take risks by trying new and often innovative approaches to promote learning. All of these features promote good attitudes to learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers' skills are less well developed, particularly in their use of assessment information and sometimes in their planning to deploy additional adults.

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced to accommodate the individual needs and interests of all. Excellent ICT facilities and other specialist resources support teaching and learning well. However, the college does not monitor discrete ICT teaching in Key Stage 4 to ensure all students receive their entitlement. Similarly, the uptake by different groups of students across the comprehensive enrichment curriculum is not monitored closely enough to identify patterns of participation. The Creative Competency Curriculum in Year 7 focuses on developing literacy and the acquisition of key skills for learning. A wide range of vocational and academic courses promote enjoyment of learning. In the last year these developments have made a substantial contribution to the pattern of improving outcomes for different groups and subjects.

A coherent pastoral framework closely links individuals' academic progress with their social, emotional and learning needs. Well-established partnerships with other agencies have contributed to the greater enjoyment of college and improved attendance of potentially vulnerable students. Productive links with further and higher education institutions encourage the aspirations of the more able students. Mixed-age tutor groups break down year-group barriers and inter-house activities encourage healthy competition. Students are well cared for and the very large majority of students recognised this in their questionnaire responses.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides aspirational leadership. His ambition and drive are shared by the wider leadership and permeate to classroom level. The impact is evident in the accelerating rate of college improvement. Assessment information is used well at a strategic level to inform target setting and combines with purposeful planning to focus the college's efforts on the right priorities. Effective partnerships at a variety of levels promote students' achievements and their personal development and well-being. A deep appreciation of the college's context has driven innovative work to promote good community cohesion, notably, the links with heritage communities in the Punjab. The governing body offers appropriate challenge and support and ensures that arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Those responsible for leading and managing the college have created an inclusive ethos where the needs of all are accorded equal priority.

A very effective programme of professional development has strengthened the quality of teaching since the last inspection and reduced inconsistencies in practice. Staff value highly a bespoke approach which accommodates their different needs to improve classroom practice. In the few instances where teachers' use of assessment in lessons

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

requires further development, the intensity of support is insufficient to effect rapid improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Very few parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. The college's analysis of feedback from its own questionnaires shows that the large majority of parents and carers attend parents' evenings for each year group. Their responses to the college's questionnaire also showed that the large majority are satisfied with the standard of education the college provides and consider that: their children are safe from harassment or bullying; the quality of teaching and progress are good; and the college is well led and managed. Inspectors endorse their views about leadership and management and found that teaching and progress are satisfactory but improving strongly. Inspectors also found that students enjoy college and feel very safe and well cared for.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marsden Heights 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 706 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	44	7	44	2	13	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	50	8	50	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	7	44	8	50	1	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	25	10	63	2	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	38	9	56	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	19	10	63	2	13	1	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	25	10	63	0	0	2	13
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)	5	31	9	56	1	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	19	13	81	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	19	13	81	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	19	10	63	2	13	1	6
The school is led and managed effectively	4	25	12	75	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	44	9	56	0	0	0	0

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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



4 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Marsden Heights Community College, Nelson, BB9 0PR

I write on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for your helpful contributions to the recent inspection. Most of you told us that you enjoy college and appreciate the wonderful new building and resources that support your learning. You value the relationships you have with teachers and the quality of care you receive.

We found your college to be a harmonious and friendly community. We thought you were polite and welcoming to visitors. We also found that your academic achievements are improving and you have a broad range of courses to meet your interests and learning needs. Your behaviour is good and many of you are developing positive attitudes to learning and this is helping your progress.

Mr Tull and other college leaders have helped to make some important improvements since your college was last inspected. They have a very clear idea about how to keep on doing this. We have asked them to do a few other things that will also help. We would like them to:

- make sure that teachers always use the information they have about your different levels of knowledge, understanding and skills to plan tasks that help everyone make good progress
- make sure that all teachers get maximum benefit from the good programme of professional development the college makes available to them
- check carefully that all Key Stage 4 students receive the right amount of information and communication technology (ICT) teaching
- check the attendance patterns for after-college activities and clubs to make sure there is something to interest everyone so that you all participate.

I look forward to reading of your continued achievements when the college is next inspected.

Yours sincerely,

Cathryn Kirby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.