

Mortimer Community College

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108727 |
| Local Authority | South Tyneside |
| Inspection number | 337132 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 February 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Christine Graham HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 923 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Ian Palmer |
| Headteacher | Ms Claire Mullane |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Reading Road South Shields Tyne and Wear NE33 4UG |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent almost half of the inspection time looking at learning and students' progress. Inspectors observed 24 lessons and held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at external evaluations of the school's effectiveness, the school's tracking and assessment data, students' books, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning and 259 parental, 125 student and 27 staff questionnaires.

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

- how well the school helps students of all ages, abilities and ethnicities to learn and to make progress
- students' progress in mathematics
- the effectiveness of the support provided for students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements
- the success of the actions taken to reduce exclusions and improve attendance.

Information about the school

The school is about the same size as most secondary schools. Most students are of White British heritage. There are small numbers of students from a number of other ethnic groups. The largest group is that of students of Bangladeshi heritage. A small number of students are refugees or asylum seekers. Nineteen languages are spoken in school and a few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is above average. A relatively high proportion of students join the school at other than the usual time. The school is a specialist school for sports and the arts. The school is in the midst of significant building work.

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

The senior team has introduced a range of measures designed to improve all aspects of the schools' work. These have had a positive impact. Students say that they feel safe and they have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. The school is a very cohesive community. Students from minority groups say that they feel well respected and they are fully included in the life of the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. Students' behaviour is satisfactory overall. Although much of the behaviour seen during the inspection was good, a very high proportion of students receive fixed-term exclusions. This figure is declining, but remains above average. A relatively high proportion of students that transfer into the school have attendance issues. The school monitors students' attendance rigorously but despite its best efforts attendance remains low.

Students' attainment, as measured by the outcomes of national examinations at Key Stage 4, is improving rapidly. When students join the school their attainment is below average. More students gained five or more GCSE A* to C grades in examinations taken at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2008 and 2009 than did so nationally. The proportion attaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics also improved although it remained below the national average. A higher than average proportion of students attained A* to C grades in English, but the proportion of students attaining these grades in mathematics, although improving year-on-year, was below the national figure. The small number of students of Bangladeshi heritage did not attain as well as their peers in 2009, but school data indicate that most students from minority ethnic groups are on track to attain their predicted grades in 2010. The school enters some students for GCSE and other external examinations in Years 9 and 10 and this is having a positive impact on their attainment and on their motivation.

The school tracks students' progress rigorously. Data show that students of all ages and abilities make satisfactory progress overall. Students' progress accelerates in Key Stage 4 because the school has introduced a number of successful strategies to raise attainment and the curriculum is well matched to their needs. The specialist subjects promote students' achievement well. Lessons are lively and interesting and all students of all ages and abilities make good progress and enjoy learning. Teaching is not as effective in English, mathematics and science. Many teachers do not use information from day-to-day or longer term assessment when planning tasks for students. As a result, all students are usually given the same work. This does not challenge the most able and does not help the least able to develop independent learning skills. The school's marking policy is intended to help students close the attainment gap by giving

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them guidance on how to improve their work. This is not as effective as it should be because teachers do not apply the policy consistently. Many teachers do not identify or correct longstanding weakness in students' spelling, grammar or punctuation. The support provided for students at an early stage of learning English is good and as a result, they make good progress.

The headteacher, governors and senior team are ambitious and determined. They have managed the building project successfully and have made the most of the opportunities the new building provides. Senior leaders have a broadly accurate view of the school's overall effectiveness but some of the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation form were a little too generous. The school has implemented all the latest guidance on keeping students safe and it promotes their health and well-being very effectively. The school's partnerships with parents are satisfactory. Most parents are happy with all that the school provides, but a small minority do not feel that their views are taken into account. The school surveys parents but does not focus on particular areas of concern. The school has identified this as an area for improvement. There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of some key subjects and areas of the school's work. Some middle leaders do not monitor the work of their departments rigorously and, as a result, some aspects of the school's work are not improving quickly enough. This is a barrier to the school's further improvement so its capacity to improve is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' learning and progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use information from day-to-day assessment and marking when planning work for students
 - ensuring that new approaches to teaching and learning are applied consistently by all teachers
 - identifying and eradicating weaknesses in students' basic skills.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders monitor the work of their departments robustly and use the outcomes of monitoring activities to plan further improvements
 - ensuring that all members of the leadership team have an accurate view of the effectiveness of key initiatives.
- Improve partnerships with parents, by:
 - implementing a focused approach to gathering information
 - ensuring that the school provides parents with sufficient information to allay their concerns.
- Improve attendance and further reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- 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

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inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The school has improved the provision made for students in Key Stage 4 and, as a result, all of the outcomes of national examinations have improved in recent years. In 2009, nearly all students left the school with at least one qualification, this included some students with erratic attendance and those that were vulnerable or 'harder to reach'. Students follow curricular pathways that help them to gain the skills and qualifications needed to go onto further education, employment or training. The school's provision for the most vulnerable students or those at risk of leaving without qualifications is good. The school has taken steps to improve the performance of under-achieving groups. This has been successful. All students make satisfactory progress by the end of their time in school, but evidence from lesson observations and work in students' books indicates that they do not progress as well in English and mathematics as in other subjects. This is particularly true in Years 7 and 8 but it is also a feature of lessons in other year groups. The school provides additional support for reading in Year 7. It does not evaluate the outcomes of this work rigorously enough and as a result it has too positive a view of students' progress and is doing too little to eradicate longstanding weaknesses. The school is increasing opportunities for students to work as part of a group or with a partner but this is at an early stage. The school promotes healthy eating and students have good opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles through work in the specialist subjects.

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 | 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 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |

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

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 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 extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 4 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Too much of the teaching in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. There is more good teaching in other subjects. In the best lessons, work is well matched to students' needs. Teachers have a secure understanding of their students' current levels of attainment and they use this information to challenge students of all abilities. Teachers provide students with effective guidance that helps them to make good progress. Students are encouraged to evaluate their own work and that of others. They accept feedback from their peers and use it to improve their work. The pace of lessons is brisk and teacher talk is kept to a minimum. Students work on interesting tasks that help them to enjoy learning. They are provided with a great deal of support and they develop confident approaches to learning.

The curriculum is good. It is very well adapted to students' needs especially in Key Stage 4. Students can follow a number of different subject options that help them to gain external qualifications and enjoy learning. The 'Phoenix Academy' and courses run by external providers help to motivate students and encourage them to attend regularly. The care, guidance and support offered to students are good. Students in Years 7 and 8 say that they have settled into school well. They are particularly positive about the support provided by the student welfare leaders and they say that this helps any difficulties to be sorted out promptly. Older students are less positive about some recent changes, particularly the 'on site policy' at lunchtimes. Although they accept that this keeps them safe and encourages them to eat a healthy diet they say that they preferred the option of going out at lunchtime. All students can remain in the building at break and lunchtimes. This promotes their social and personal skills. The school provides students with good support during key points in their lives. There are effective partnerships with a range of external agencies and the local college. Senior staff visit the families of 'hard to reach' students and there are some bilingual staff. This aids transition and ensures that families are consulted.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors are well informed and they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role. They support and challenge the senior team. The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are good. The school has good partnerships with other schools and external agencies. These promote students' achievement, health and well-being very effectively. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. Its understanding of the religious, ethnic social and economic characteristics of the local community is good. The school works with a range of community groups. The positive impact of this work can be seen within school. All students have equal opportunities to learn and make progress. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are driving the improvement process. They are narrowing the gap between the attainment of students in the school and their peers nationally. They have introduced a number of new approaches that should ensure that students' attainment continues to improve. However, the impact of this work is limited because of weaknesses in middle management. This means that the senior team are managing much of the school's provision and leadership is not fully developed at all levels.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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

Most parents are pleased with their child's experience at school. Some parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very pleased with the

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support their children have received. A small number of parents do not feel that students should be kept in at lunchtime. Inspectors disagree with this view. Lunchtime arrangements are good. The dining experience is pleasant and although there is some queuing, most students are served within a short time. All students can remain in the building and this ensures that they are safe. Informal feedback suggests that the local community are pleased with the school's policy. A small proportion of parents are concerned about their child's progress and about some teaching in the core subjects. Inspectors agree that these aspects could be improved. A small proportion of parents are concerned about students' behaviour and about the way that the school tackles bullying. Most students say that they feel safe and the behaviour seen during the inspection was generally good, especially during lunch and break times. The school excludes some students in order to safeguard the health and safety of others so inspectors feel that any issues are handled effectively. A small number of parents felt that the school did not take their views into account and that communication could be improved. Inspectors agree and think that the school could do more to seek parents' views and allay their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mortimer 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 259 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 923 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 57 | 22 | 161 | 62 | 33 | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 69 | 27 | 168 | 65 | 15 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 78 | 30 | 151 | 58 | 16 | 6 | 6 | 2 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 76 | 29 | 147 | 57 | 26 | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 57 | 22 | 168 | 65 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 56 | 22 | 134 | 52 | 52 | 20 | 4 | 2 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 43 | 17 | 170 | 66 | 30 | 12 | 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) | 68 | 26 | 156 | 60 | 13 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 53 | 20 | 160 | 62 | 30 | 12 | 2 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 56 | 22 | 143 | 55 | 36 | 14 | 12 | 5 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 42 | 16 | 147 | 57 | 35 | 14 | 10 | 4 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 58 | 22 | 158 | 61 | 22 | 8 | 4 | 2 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 63 | 24 | 151 | 58 | 27 | 10 | 6 | 2 |

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">■ 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 pupil's 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.



16 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Mortimer Community College, South Shields, NE33 4UG

Thank you for being so welcoming when we inspected your school. We were very impressed by your courtesy and by the confident and thoughtful way you responded to us. We were very pleased to see how well you get on with each other. You told us that you feel safe. We agree with you. The school has good procedures to keep you safe during the day. We know that the oldest students are a little upset by some recent changes but we feel that they have a beneficial impact on your health and safety.

Attainment in national tests and examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 is improving. This is because the school has introduced a range of strategies designed to support you and help you to achieve well. The curriculum has been adapted and offers a range of subject choices that ensure you can find options that you will enjoy. We think you make good progress in the specialist subjects and we could see how much you enjoy these lessons. You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics because teachers do not use information about your attainment to plan work that meets your needs. When all students in the class do the same tasks they are too hard for some and too easy for others. The school has introduced new ways of marking your books and some teachers are encouraging you to evaluate your own work and that of your peers. However, these new ways of working are not implemented effectively in all lessons because some school leaders do not monitor their subjects or areas of responsibility rigorously enough. We have asked the school to ensure that things improve.

Some of your parents felt communication between the school and home could be improved. We have asked the school to implement a focused approach to gathering information and to ensure that it provides parents with enough information to allay their concerns. We thought your behaviour was generally good, but a relatively high proportion of students receive fixed-term exclusions from school, so this indicates that some students do not behave well enough. The number of exclusions has declined and we have asked the school to reduce this further. The school tries hard to improve your attendance, but despite their best efforts some of you do not attend regularly enough. If you are not at school you cannot benefit from all that it offers and you are not well enough prepared for your future lives.

We enjoyed our visit and we wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Graham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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