

Mortimer Community College

Reading Road, South Shields, Tyne and Wear NE33 4UG

Inspection dates

10–11 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite improvements since the last inspection, the quality of teaching requires further improvement. This is because, over time, it has not ensured that pupils make good progress, particularly in science and geography.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not make good progress from their different starting points. Leaders acknowledge that recent strategies to tackle this have not had the desired impact and so have adapted them accordingly.
- Teachers' use of assessment systems is inconsistent. As a result, not all teachers check how well pupils are achieving in class in order to plan work that helps them move on with their learning.
- Sometimes, teachers' questioning is not used skilfully enough to extend, challenge or deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The school's strategy to ensure that teachers develop pupils' literacy skills across the wider curriculum has yet to be embraced fully by all staff.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher identified the actions needed to improve the school swiftly and accurately. He has established a culture where teaching and learning are the priority. Pupils are making better progress as a result.
- Leaders have instilled a positive culture for learning. This has a strong impact on pupils' behaviour and aspirations. The school is in a strong position to secure further improvement.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school to do better. Governors are effective in challenging the school and holding leaders to account. They are knowledgeable and bring a range of professional skills to their role.
- Pupils attend school regularly and behave well, both in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and care about each other. Pupils take pride in their appearance and their school.
- The proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in GCSE English and mathematics by the end of key stage 4 has improved over the past two years.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in lessons and through a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress, especially for disadvantaged pupils and in science and geography, by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of assessment information to plan learning activities that build on what pupils already know, understand and can do
 - teachers check pupils' understanding routinely in lessons and adapt work so that knowledge and understanding are secured, extended and deepened for more pupils
 - teachers use questioning to challenge pupils to explain their ideas and deepen their understanding
 - pupils get more opportunities to practise and embed their literacy skills across a wide range of subjects and leaders monitor the impact of this.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher has galvanised the senior leaders, staff and governors through his high expectations and ambition that all pupils will thrive during their time at the school. He has built on improvements begun following disappointing outcomes after the last inspection, and has accelerated the pace of improvement rapidly. His culture of high standards and expectations is spreading across the school well.
- The headteacher is ably supported by his deputy headteacher and senior team. They all share the commitment to drive the school forward. As a result, all leaders are ambitious for pupils' futures, rightly addressing all aspects of their experience of school and tackling potential barriers. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Senior leaders and governors know the strengths in the school and what needs to be done to improve teaching further. They are taking appropriate actions to accelerate improvement. For example, leaders and governors carry out regular observations and 'learning walks' of teaching and learning. This enables them to identify more quickly where improvements are needed and to provide focused support where required. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving quickly.
- Middle leaders understand how and why challenge has increased. They are committed to raising achievement and improving teaching in their subject areas. The impact of middle leadership can be seen in improved teaching and pupil's faster progress, for example in mathematics. Importantly, middle leaders have secured the support and commitment of their colleagues, who share their determination to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching further. Senior leaders are becoming increasingly effective in holding middle leaders to account for the impact of their work through more robust performance management arrangements.
- Targets set for teachers indicate the headteacher's high expectations. They focus on the 'core business' of the school, which is improving pupils' achievement through consistent, high-quality teaching. Staff access professional development opportunities that are matched closely to their identified training needs. Staff speak highly of the 'Department Showcase' event because it allows them to share and learn from good practice currently in the school.
- Staff at the school are responding positively to the changes. They report that change has been managed well. They understand change is focused on improving teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. Consequently, staff morale is high.
- The school's curriculum meets pupils' needs increasingly well. For many pupils, the curriculum is tailored to their future aspirations and their interests. Pupils speak highly of the advice and guidance they are given and appreciate the broad range of subjects that they can access. In particular, key stage 4 pupils speak with passion and enthusiasm about their 'social ethics' lessons and the support teachers give so readily.
- Pupils engage in a wide range of sporting, performance and extra-curricular activities. Such activities have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. For example, all Year 7 and Year 8 pupils engage in at least one after-school club per week, which

develops their social skills and ensures that they contribute to the wider life of the school by being responsible, positive young citizens.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively because the school has a strong focus on promoting high aspirations and positive behaviour. This is helping pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and for their learning.
- Leaders have embraced the heightened demands of a more challenging curriculum. They have introduced an aspirational target and assessment system that aligns with their 'high expectations for all' philosophy. There are regular points to monitor and report on pupils' current progress. This information is now used to ensure that parents receive subject-specific feedback on their child's progress, which also helps them to support their child's learning at home.
- Special educational needs funding is being used effectively to provide targeted support to identified pupils. The special educational needs coordinator tracks pupils' progress across the curriculum and has built positive relationships with pupils and parents. A bespoke curriculum for identified pupils, for example in English and mathematics, is allowing these pupils to make progress in line with other pupils with similar starting points.
- Local authority school improvement staff, commissioned by the headteacher, provide good-quality support and challenge. This has ensured that leaders have benefited from external scrutiny of their views of the effectiveness of the provision. It has also ensured that leaders have had opportunities to reflect on what is working well and what needs to improve further.
- Leaders at all levels are directly involved in checking the quality of teaching. For example, 'departmental reviews' have been a positive vehicle for leaders to identify the strengths and development areas for each department. However, leaders are aware of the need to now focus on the impact teaching is having on pupils' learning and progress over time. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to be more systematic and evaluative in their approach.
- Leaders have introduced specific strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These include targeted support and intervention programmes. This is particularly evident with Year 11 pupils who engage in the 'Aim High' classes. Disadvantaged pupils in other year groups are doing better because of targeted use of appropriate funding. Leaders, however, are not diminishing these gaps quickly enough in all subjects, particularly in science and geography.

Governance of the school

- Improvements in governance have gone hand in hand with the improvements seen in the school's work. Governors have supported the school well through a time of instability following the previous headteacher's departure and the recruitment of a strong, new leader.
- Governors are passionate in their commitment to the school and their role in improving standards. They share leaders' ambition to drive improvements forward.

- Governors are knowledgeable about the school’s strengths and weaknesses. They have worked with school leaders to secure improvements in the quality of teaching, across the whole school and in science and geography.
- Governors have clear roles and responsibilities. It is because of this that they have been increasingly effective in challenging leaders to address underperformance and hold teachers to account.
- Governors are skilled and well trained and monitor the safeguarding work of the school regularly.
- Governors know exactly what the school uses additional funding for. Consequently, they hold leaders to account for the use of this additional funding. As a result, governors are aware that some strategies need to be evaluated by leaders, so that governors are assured that the strategies are having a positive impact on pupils’ outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. They have established a culture whereby keeping pupils safe is everyone’s responsibility. Staff are trained regularly in safeguarding and child protection and have an up-to-date knowledge of risks and how to respond to them. Staff are mindful of pupils’ welfare. If staff have any concerns, they refer them to the designated lead for safeguarding immediately.
- Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to work at the school and records are detailed. Leaders have strong links with external agencies and make timely referrals to services, such as children’s social care, when pupils are at risk. Outcomes of referrals are checked carefully.
- Pupils have a clear awareness of how to stay safe. Pupils speak confidently about how to stay safe online and the dangers of social media. Pupils also speak confidently about how to recognise the signs of abuse or bullying. They know what they would do to support and protect others.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving. Leaders have tackled weak practice with vigour. However, teaching requires improvement because it is not yet enabling all groups of pupils to make good or better progress, particularly in science and geography.
- Some teachers do not provide work that challenges pupils’ understanding or deepens their knowledge sufficiently. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Not all teachers check pupils’ learning and progress with sufficient precision. As a result, teachers miss opportunities to reshape tasks and intervene so that pupils’ misconceptions are tackled swiftly. Where this is the case, pupils do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable, including disadvantaged pupils.

- On some occasions, questioning is not used skilfully by teachers to challenge pupils' thinking and opportunities are missed to gauge their understanding in greater depth. However, where questioning is used skilfully and effectively, for example in physical education, English, mathematics and history, it extends and deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- In a minority of subjects, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to read subject-specific texts or write at length for different purposes and audiences. Leaders have recognised that more work needs to be done to improve teaching and learning further. One way to do this is by ensuring that pupils practise and apply their reading and writing skills in all subjects.
- Leaders' fastidious tracking and monitoring of assessment information are increasingly effective. This is because they provide teachers with more useful information about pupils' progress and any 'gaps' pupils may have in their understanding. Some teachers use this information well and identify clearly what pupils need to do to make faster progress. However, some teachers do not use this assessment information well enough. As a result, learning activities do not build on what pupils already know, understand or can do.
- Leaders' decisive actions have strengthened teaching in mathematics. Learning activities are increasingly well matched to pupils' different levels of ability. As a result, pupils use their mathematical knowledge with growing confidence and fluency. Importantly, pupils grasp key concepts quickly and are challenged to use their knowledge and skills to reason and solve complex problems.
- Pupils are taught effectively in history. As a result, pupils are given opportunities to develop their leadership skills by taking on 'team leader' roles. They are able to evaluate the significance of source materials in relation to key historical events. Teachers' use of strong subject knowledge to ask searching questions prepares pupils effectively for examinations and extends their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress because targeted teaching provides them with carefully structured support and challenge.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. There are effective, established routines, so that pupils know what to expect when they enter a classroom. When teachers show real enthusiasm for their subject and plan lessons that take into account pupils' needs and abilities, this has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are proud of their school, attend regularly, dress smartly and are keen to do well.
- Leaders have created a nurturing and supportive learning community where pupils' personal, social and emotional development is promoted. The school community is built on respect and tolerance. Leaders have ensured that the school community is inclusive.

Consequently, pupils say unanimously that they feel safe and would be quick to ask for advice and support should they need it.

- Pupils are well aware of who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. They are confident that staff will deal with any worries or concerns swiftly and in an appropriate way.
- Teachers make sure that they teach pupils to understand important values that will allow them to be successful citizens. For example, assemblies and tutorial lessons give pupils the opportunity to explore and discuss different faiths and religions, and also different forms of bullying. Year 11 pupils speak confidently about their 'moral duty' in helping others. Specific days and events are scheduled to allow pupils the opportunity to explore issues such as e-safety.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive regular impartial information, advice and guidance about the choices they make as they prepare for the next stage of their employment, education or training. Pupils value this highly. The proportion of pupils that do not move on to education, employment or training is extremely low.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' conduct around the school site is calm and orderly. They mix well together during social times and are supportive of each other's needs and feelings. The values of tolerance and respect permeate through the school community.
- Leaders have set high standards of behaviour. This means that there is minimal disruption to learning. School routines and high expectations are reinforced by staff. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other, adults and visitors. They are proud of their school and want to do well in lessons. The vast majority of pupils are very aware of the school's values and the higher expectations expected since the arrival of the new headteacher. As a result, pupils are making much better progress.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons and they arrive prepared to learn, with the right equipment, so that they can engage in their learning.
- The attendance of all groups of pupils is above the national average and continues to improve. Persistent absence rates are below the national average and also continue to reduce. Leaders are relentless in their ambition to ensure that every pupil attends school every day. They are supported by the school attendance officer. One pupil humorously commented to an inspector that 'You can't be ill here!', therefore demonstrating pupils' understanding of how important it is to attend school.
- A small minority of pupils have attitudes to learning which are not as positive as they could be. However, school leaders and appropriate staff are working with these pupils and their parents to tackle this through appropriate support and intervention.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- From pupils' broadly average starting points, in 2016, due to the variable quality of teaching, pupils did not make progress in line with their peers nationally. While

progress is improving in a number of areas, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in a wide range of subjects.

- As a consequence of leaders' effective actions to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' progress is improving. Currently, Year 11 pupils are attaining higher standards and making better progress from their individual starting points. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics.
- While pupils' progress is improving in English, mathematics and history, pupils are not currently making consistently good progress in a range of other subjects. This is particularly the case in science and geography.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics was below the national average in 2016. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils currently in school are making stronger progress, especially those in key stage 4. This is due to the improved teaching and support that pupils receive in this subject.
- Until recently, disadvantaged pupils have made notably less progress than other pupils at the school compared to other pupils nationally. As a result, their attainment has also been well below that of other pupils. Leaders' decisive actions are beginning to have a rapid, positive impact. Currently, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress across all year groups and particularly in English, history and mathematics.
- The progress of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is also improving. Inspection evidence, including in lessons and in pupils' books, shows that more of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are being challenged to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, this is not yet consistently the case.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are currently making better progress because of timely and effective support.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in GCSE English and mathematics improved. This has been the case over the past two years. Lower-attaining pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils in this group, made better progress than their peers.

School details

Unique reference number	108727
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10032156

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	767
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Coldwell
Headteacher	Simon Hignett
Telephone number	01914 566 511
Website	www.mortimercommunitycollege.co.uk/
Email address	admin@mortimercommunitycollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 December 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and require an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils requiring additional in-school support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons across all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. They also scrutinised pupils' work in books.
- They held meetings with leaders and other staff at the school, including the local authority's school improvement adviser and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in groups, in lessons and around the school.
- They checked the seven responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and looked at the free-text comments submitted by those parents. Inspectors also checked the school's own staff survey information.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's development plan and written evaluation of its work, policies and records relating to safeguarding and records relating to pupils' behaviour. The school's assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, and other relevant information about the work of the school, were also reviewed.

Inspection team

Darren Stewart, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dan Murray	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Elliott	Ofsted Inspector
John McNally	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Suddes	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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