

Inspection of Mortimer Community College

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

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak highly of this welcoming and inclusive school. The school does a considerable amount of work to support the local community and charities. This work encourages pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pastoral care is of a high quality. Staff ensure that pupils get support when they need it. Pupils behave well at the school. They share positive relationships with staff. A culture of mutual respect permeates the school.

Pupils' positive pastoral experience is not matched by their academic outcomes. The school has high ambitions for all pupils to succeed. However, in several subjects, this ambition is not realised. Pupils, including the most disadvantaged, achieve less well than their peers nationally. They are not as well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training as they might be.

The school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to enjoy new experiences. These include educational visits to foreign countries, work experience weeks and undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils value opportunities to discuss and debate new ideas in lessons. The form time programme helps pupils to engage in topical issues, learn more about managing money and looking after the environment.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has acted on some important school improvement priorities. For example, the structure of lessons and the questions that staff ask pupils are now more effective. However, the school's plans to improve the quality of education pupils receive lack precision. As a result, pupils have not achieved as well as they might over time.

What pupils will study in each subject has been carefully considered. Changes have been made to the key stage 4 curriculum in several subjects. Topics build clearly upon one another. Staff regularly recap on previous learning. This helps some pupils to remember more of what they have been taught.

The way that staff check what pupils know and can do is inconsistent. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills remain unaddressed. Lessons are not adapted to fill these gaps. As a result, pupils do not gain a deep understanding of important topics. Additionally, activity choices in some lessons do not meet the needs of pupils well. This negatively impacts pupils' learning.

The school has developed strategies to improve pupils' literacy. However, these are not consistently used by all staff. Important vocabulary is not emphasised or understood in some lessons. Support for pupils at an early stage of learning to read is underdeveloped. Pupils' low literacy levels are negatively impacting their learning, in some cases.

Staff value the opportunities they receive for professional development. The school has provided training to support improvement priorities. This training has included supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive appropriate

information on the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND feel well supported by the school. However, some staff do not adapt lessons as well as they might. This impacts how well pupils with SEND learn the curriculum.

Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Persistent absence has not improved significantly over time. The school's approach to addressing issues caused by poor attendance is not as carefully considered as it should be. When pupils miss learning because of absence, there is no consistent approach to remedying gaps that may arise. As a result, pupils who attend poorly, achieve less well than their peers.

The school's careers programme informs and inspires pupils to consider a wide range of jobs. Pupils benefit from independent careers advice and guidance. Visiting speakers from local and national companies support pupil's ambitions for their futures. Pupils understand how to stay healthy and safe. They have an adult they would speak to if something worried them. Pupils know the importance of being resilient and positive mental health.

Early career teachers are supported by the school on a programme that has been well tailored to their needs. Staff are proud to work at the school. The governing body passionately believes in what the school does. It supports the work of the school and provides funding to help vulnerable pupils gain new experiences. However, the governing body is not well informed about the quality of education on offer at the school. They have not effectively supported and challenged the school to improve this over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not consistently check what pupils know and can do before moving on to new learning. As a result, suitable adjustments to lessons are not made for all pupils, including those with SEND. Gaps in pupil's knowledge and understanding persist. The school should ensure that staff respond effectively to what pupils do and, do not, know and plan future learning to address these gaps.
- The school's plans to improve the quality of education pupils receive lack precision. Some important priorities remain unaddressed. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. The school should evaluate the strategies that are having the most impact on tackling under-achievement and implement these at pace across the school.
- The school's work to improve the literacy of pupils, especially those at an early stage of learning to read, is underdeveloped. Some strategies are recent or are not implemented consistently. As a result, pupil's understanding of important vocabulary is not as secure as it might be. The school should ensure an effective programme to

improve pupil's literacy is in place, including for those at an early stage of learning to read or who are new to speaking English.

- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. Persistent absence has not reduced significantly over time. This is leading to gaps in pupil's knowledge and understanding, which the school has not successfully addressed. The school should ensure strategies to improve attendance are regularly evaluated and that there is a strong, shared understanding of the importance of good attendance across the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108727
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10346268
Type of school	Community School
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stephen Coldwell
Headteacher	Simon Hignett
Website	www.mortimercommunitycollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 September 2019

Information about this school

- The school uses three providers of alternative education. Two are registered with the Department for Education. One is not registered with the Department for Education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for careers education at the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience in lessons, enrichment opportunities and what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and those who mentor them.
- One inspector met with the leaders responsible for literacy across the school. One inspector observed a range of reading interventions taking place.
- Inspectors examined the school's behaviour records and spoke with providers of alternative education.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Geoff Lumsdon	Ofsted Inspector
Kieran McGrane	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector
Dan McKeating	His Majesty's Inspector

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