

# Heathfield Community College

## Inspection report

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|                                |                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 114587               |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | East Sussex          |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 378894               |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 14–15 March 2012     |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Hilary Macdonald 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>                      | Comprehensive   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community   |
| <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> | 1433  |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 241   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                                      |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Richard Karn  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Alan Powell   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 14 January 2009   |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Cade Street<br>Old Heathfield<br>Heathfield<br>TN21 8RJ |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01435 866066  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01435 867155  |
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|                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 11–18            |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 14–15 March 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 378894           |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Cooper

Additional inspector

Lucia Devine

Additional inspector

Steven Smith

Additional inspector

Roger Thurlbeck

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 41 lessons, taught by 39 teachers. Ten of the lessons were jointly observed by a member of the school's leadership team. One inspector undertook a learning walk which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for lower-ability students and those with special educational needs. Meetings were held with five groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a number of school staff including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the school's own monitoring records, policy documents, students' work and information regarding students' attainment and progress. The inspection team also considered an analysis of 84 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 104 from staff and 145 returned by students.

## Information about the school

Heathfield Community College is significantly larger than most secondary schools and has held specialist status for visual and performing arts since 2003. It holds the Gold Artsmark. Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that found nationally. The overall proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average, with the proportion of students with statements of special educational needs being similar to that found in most other schools. The college provides specialist provision for students with autism and those with severe speech and language difficulties. The college meets the government's current floor standard, which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

**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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>2</b> |

## Key findings

- Heathfield Community College is a good school that is determined to keep improving. The sixth form is good. A commitment to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education pervades all aspects of school life and there is a tangible sense of pride, ambition and community within the college. The college is not outstanding because not all students make enough progress in English or in Key Stage 3.
- Students' achievement is good overall and outstanding for disabled students and those with special educational needs. The school recognises that there is still more to be done to improve target setting.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, know the school well. They are aware of its strengths and act effectively to address identified weaknesses. There are consistent approaches to teaching throughout the college. The academic curriculum is enhanced by vocational pathways and this enables all students to achieve in ways appropriate to their individual strengths and interests.
- Teaching is mainly good, with some that is outstanding and some that remains only satisfactory. Typically, teachers in all departments have good subject knowledge and successfully convey their own subject enthusiasm to students. Sometimes, however, teachers dominate the talking, reducing opportunities for students to work collaboratively or independently for extended periods. Assessments are used well to match the level of work closely to students' learning needs and the quality of verbal feedback from teachers is very good. Written feedback to students, however, is inconsistent throughout the school and, as a result, students do not always have absolute clarity about how to improve.
- Students have positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to succeed. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They make many positive contributions to the smooth running of the college.

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

- Improve the overall quality of teaching by ensuring that:
  - students receive high-quality feedback about their work
  - students' work is regularly marked in all subjects and they are given guidance on how to improve to which they always have the opportunity to respond
  - students are afforded maximum opportunities to be active learners by working collaboratively and independently for extended periods.
- Raise students' achievement so that all are able to fulfil their potential by ensuring that students' targets are sufficiently challenging and are reviewed when they are surpassed.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students make good progress in lessons, particularly during practical tasks and when given opportunities to discuss their work and direct lines of enquiry. Most parents and carers rightly believe that their children make good progress at the school. In the majority of lessons, teachers demonstrate an accurate understanding of how students learn and make progress. In an outstanding Year 8 English lesson, students were challenged and supported with carefully prepared resources. They were questioned about the strategies they were employing to learn, and there were frequent references to previous learning, core skills and next steps. Consequently, students made rapid progress. The school's arts specialism is demonstrated in displays of the highest quality artwork around the school and was observed in an outstanding performing arts lesson.

Overall, students' achievement is better in mathematics than it is in English and students do not make quite as good progress in Key Stage 3 as they do in Key Stage 4. The school has rightly targeted additional support for those students in Year 11 who have not made the anticipated progress towards their GCSEs in English and/or mathematics. As a result, many are now making rapid progress. There is currently no evident discrepancy between students' rates of progress in different subjects. Over time, students' good attainment has been maintained, as demonstrated by the consistently high number of students who gain A\* to C grades in a range of GCSEs, including core science, English literature, geography and French. However, 2011 GCSE results saw a fall in the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics from above average to broadly average.

Gaps in performance identified in the 2011 GCSE results between girls and boys are no longer evident and the college's approach of prevention rather than cure when students are identified as falling behind is being conspicuously successful. A broad and varied curriculum ensures that students of all abilities have genuine choice and, as a result, students of all levels progress equally well. Disabled students and those

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with special educational needs are making significantly better progress than their peers nationally and the achievement of this group is outstanding.

With astute leadership, the sixth form secures good achievement. Students' rates of progress are steadily continuing to improve and outcomes in Year 12 are particularly strong. The sixth form provides an appropriate blend of A-level and vocational courses, including further mathematics, photography and health and social care. School monitoring data indicate that A-level performance is on track to improve further. Staff in the sixth form care well for students and provide thoughtful guidance which is highly personalised.

### Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall, including in the sixth form, and the majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires spoke positively about it. Lessons are characterised by teachers' secure and enthusiastically conveyed subject knowledge, high expectations and confident use of varied resources, including information and communication technology. Consequently, students are motivated and industrious and demonstrate good behaviour built on positive relationships and a shared commitment to learning. The best lessons are sharply focused and are driven by clear and explicit objectives. In such lessons, learning moves briskly and teachers' questions are probing, ensuring students' understanding or identifying misconceptions that can be instantly addressed. When the opportunity is presented, students respond well to requirements to work in pairs or groups. In an outstanding Year 12 sociology lesson, students worked in threes, reviewing their own objectives and supporting each other in identifying precisely how to achieve them. Skilful teaching, including the use of assessment, resulted in students making excellent progress in their independent tasks. 'I think I know....no, I *know* I know....,' remarked one student during the plenary, indicating the ability to self-assess accurately.

Across the curriculum, an emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident so that students learn tolerance and respect for others as well as reflecting on human rights and the environment. Teachers' planning over time is a strength because they demonstrate a good awareness of the needs of different groups of students, and provide activities which deepen their understanding. In the small number of cases where lessons are no more than satisfactory, student participation is reduced, or the poor use of assessment information means that tasks prepared for students are not adequately challenging.

Students talk confidently about their targets and the helpful advice they receive from their teachers. However, high quality marking and feedback tend to focus on assessment pieces, rather than being regular practice. Little evidence was seen of students being expected to respond routinely to written feedback and therefore its impact on their progress is diminished. In addition, numbers of students were found to have exceeded their set targets, and while they knew they had to 'keep going and not stop just because you've already got there', they were unsure what to do next.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' good behaviour in lessons is a determining factor in enabling teachers to deliver high quality lessons and students to make good progress. Although responses to the inspection questionnaire for parents and carers raised some concerns about disruptive behaviour, this was not supported by the observations during the inspection or by the profile of external surveys conducted recently by the college. Inspectors spoke to many students and staff about disruption to learning and they were adamant that poor behaviour was very swiftly handled and that disruptions were rare. When students struggle to manage their own behaviour appropriately, close links are maintained with parents, carers and appropriate agencies. The creation of more personalised curriculum pathways contributes to the high levels of student engagement.

Students report they feel safe in college, and parents and carers agree. Effective steps are taken to monitor visitors on and off the school site. Students understand their role in tackling prejudice and bullying of all types. During the inspection, Year 10 buddies led tutor time in Year 7, working with them to identify different types of bullying and possible actions and reactions. Students look after one another carefully and incident logs show no cases of homophobic behaviour in the last year. Although students feel safe, they did report the unsafe decommissioned science laboratory huts on the field; rightly, students articulate that poor environments are not conducive to learning. Attendance is taken seriously by all staff and is currently broadly in line with the national average. Data are collected regularly and are rigorously monitored. Absence is routinely followed up and, in any case of persistent absenteeism, the college works effectively with the local authority.

Students are proud to be part of Heathfield Community College and act as ambassadors for their school. They behave confidently and respectfully to visitors and during the inspection gave a very positive and detailed account of student life, including the many ways in which they are part of the college improvement programme.

## **Leadership and management**

All leaders and managers are ambitious for the college community. The most senior leaders have made a concerted effort to implement and embed systems to secure school improvement. Self-evaluation processes are rigorous and accurate, although records do not always focus tightly on the impact of improvements on students' outcomes. Middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are effectively held to account for performance in their areas. Systems for monitoring students' academic progress, as well as their attitudes and dispositions, are established, enabling staff to identify groups or individuals at risk of underachieving.

The headteacher has made wide-ranging, judicious decisions regarding staffing and provision and is able to demonstrate their impact on students' outcomes. For

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example, the curriculum model allows students to follow an appropriate Key Stage 4 programme of study over a three-year period and guides students to choose pathways which suit their needs. The effective management of teaching and learning is demonstrated through the consistent approaches seen in all year groups and across all subject areas. Changes in the leadership and management of the sixth form have been implemented successfully and gains in students' attainment are clearly evident in Year 12. The continued professional learning offered to staff is extensive.

Members of the governing body demonstrate an awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. The Chair of Governors is new to this role, but brings skill and expertise and has already added rigour to the process of holding most senior staff to account. Safeguarding systems are comprehensive and relentlessly applied. The college is assertive in tackling discrimination in any form and this contributes significantly to the extremely harmonious community. It also implements its equal opportunities policies effectively. Effective monitoring of the progress of different groups of students has led to a narrowing of the gaps in achievement between them. There is a good capacity to sustain improvement.

Many students participate in the wide range of after-school activities and are appreciative of this aspect of provision. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly promoted by the high expectations of staff, who present excellent role models. Students and staff work well together through various systems of prefects and buddies, as well as through the many opportunities for part-time employment. Students display consideration for those less fortunate than themselves by raising funds for a range of charities.

## 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      | 46  | 46   | 8            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 8   | 47   | 40           | 5          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 38   | 40           | 8          |
| Special schools      | 28  | 48   | 20           | 4          |
| Pupil referral units | 15  | 50   | 29           | 5          |
| All schools          | 11  | 46   | 38           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance                 | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour                  | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| 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. |
| Safety                     | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**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 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Heathfield Community College, Heathfield TN21 8RJ**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your college recently. Particular thanks to those of you who completed questionnaires or gave up time to meet with us. We judged Heathfield Community College to be good.

Good leadership and management are bringing about sustained improvements in many aspects of the college's work. The headteacher and senior leadership team set high standards and they are well supported by staff and governors. They are all determined that you should succeed, and their work helps you to achieve well.

The college's culture of high expectations and aspiration provides you with a good platform for learning and helps you to prepare successfully for life beyond school. You told us that you feel safe, and your behaviour in and around the school and positive attitudes to learning in lessons are good. Overall you make good progress and enjoy your education because you are well taught and have a good range of options to choose from. You appreciate the benefits that the arts specialism brings – the art work on display was fabulous! You also have a good range of trips, visits and clubs which add positively to your experiences, and we were impressed by the range of responsibilities you take on, such as buddies and prefects.

In order for you to do even better, we have asked that teachers provide written feedback on your work more frequently and that lessons give you the maximum opportunity to be active in your learning. In addition, we have suggested that target setting is reviewed and made more challenging so that you always know what you are working towards.

You can help by reading and responding to comments made by your teachers and using the feedback effectively so that you improve the quality of your work.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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