



Thomas Peacocke Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114596
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 279421
Inspection dates 18 January 2006 to 19 January 2006
Reporting inspector David Butler HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	The Grove
School category	Community		Rye
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		East Sussex TN31 7NQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01797 222545
Number on roll	607	Fax number	01797 224343
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Elizabeth Baldwin
Date of previous inspection	14 January 2002	Headteacher	Mrs Ann Cockerham

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 18 January 2006 - 19 January 2006	Inspection number 279421
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Peacocke Community College is a small, rural, comprehensive school, which draws its students from the town of Rye and the surrounding area. The school is designated for students aged 11 to 18 but there is currently no post-16 provision. Nearly all students are of White British heritage and very few have English as an additional language. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. There has been a substantial fall in the number on roll over the last five years. The school was placed in special measures in January 2002 because it was not providing an adequate standard of education. It was removed from special measures following an inspection in May 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Thomas Peacocke Community College cares for its students well but overall it does not provide a satisfactory standard of education because students do not achieve well enough and they make insufficient progress by the time they leave school. This matches the school's own view that achievement is unsatisfactory. The school makes careful use of its resources but is not providing value for money because it does not provide a satisfactory standard of education. The findings of this inspection show that the school is capable of making the improvements required.

The school has had to cope with a number of problems since the last inspection. Difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff and budget restraints resulted in classes being taught by non-specialists and the curriculum at Key Stage 4 was inappropriate for many students. The school also lacked subject leaders in key areas of the curriculum. Despite the efforts of the headteacher and support from the local authority, teaching and learning suffered and pupils' behaviour deteriorated. This resulted in exceptionally low test and examination results in 2005 and inadequate progress being made, especially at Key Stage 4. Results in science and those achieved by potentially higher attaining students were most affected. Although it is still very early days, there is evidence of recent improvement. Teaching has been improved by the appointment of more specialist teachers and subject coordinators. The senior leadership team has been strengthened through several new appointments. A more robust system of monitoring lessons has been introduced. The support provided for students with learning difficulties has been improved. A more appropriate curriculum has been put in place at Key Stage 4.

Students are now making better progress, behaviour is satisfactory and exclusions have fallen. However, the legacy of poor provision means that students have not yet caught up. Teaching is satisfactory but needs to be better than this if students are to make the progress they are capable of. In particular, students are not always clear enough about what they need to do to improve and are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons. The role of subject coordinators has been strengthened but some key appointments are still to be made and there is considerable variation in their effectiveness in improving teaching and learning.

The school has a number of strengths. It has an accurate view of its performance based on evidence from its rigorous systems of monitoring. The care, guidance and support provided for students are good and this is reflected in their personal development and well-being. Students enjoy their education and attendance is above average. The headteacher and senior team provide good leadership and management and are supported well by governors. The school works productively with the local community and other partners to promote the education and well-being of its students. Parents and students are generally supportive of the school. The growing popularity of the school and its reputation in the local community are reflected by the increasing numbers of parents who are making it their first choice at the age of transfer. The school is very aware there needs to be a substantial improvement in standards if this growing confidence is to be maintained.

Nevertheless, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement, especially in Key Stage 4, in science and for potentially higher attaining students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, especially in Key Stage 4, science and for higher attaining students.
- Increase the amount of good teaching and learning by ensuring lessons engage and challenge students and encourage them to work independently and think for themselves.
- Ensure students know how to improve their work through the better use of assessment information and improving the quality of marking and other types of feedback.
- Further develop the capability of subject coordinators to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards in the 2005 tests and examinations were exceptionally low in both key stages, with a marked fall in those reached by 16 year olds compared to the previous year. Even though the general picture was a bleak one, the proportion obtaining higher GCSE grades in both English and mathematics was quite close to the national average.

The students in Key Stage 3 had low standards on entry to the school. Overall they made satisfactory progress but were prevented from doing better by the very poor results in science that stemmed from poor teaching, often by temporary staff. Also, the more able students were not stretched enough for many of them to reach the higher levels.

In Key Stage 4, the students' progress was very poor. Unstable staffing, weak teaching and unsatisfactory behaviour meant that students underperformed in many subjects. Several students entered the school after courses had started and did not make up lost ground. Courses in many cases were not well matched to students' interests and many failed to complete them. The results in mathematics were much better, matching the national average, and were proof of what the students might have achieved if their teaching and support had been better in other subjects. As it was, the school fell well short of its targets in Key Stage 4.

Progress is better now. It was satisfactory and sometimes better in most of the lessons observed and students with learning difficulties are making satisfactory progress. The school's interim assessments show that students are on course for much better results in 2006. Approximately one half of students in Year 11 have already gained a grade C or better at GCSE in mathematics. However, the legacy of poor provision means that many students have not yet caught up and in some classes are still not expected to work hard enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. Students enjoy their education. They testify to an improving curriculum, which is increasingly meeting their needs and interests. This is reflected in improved attendance, which is now above the national average. Students feel safe in school. Behaviour is satisfactory with very little bullying. There are well understood procedures for dealing with unsatisfactory conduct. Students generally have good attitudes to learning.

Students' spiritual and moral development is satisfactory and their cultural and social development is good. Many participate in extra-curricular activities and respond particularly well to those provided in music and sport. Furthermore, students are taking on an increasing range of responsibilities, as librarians or trained counsellors for example, to help other students. They undertake these duties well. Students adopt safe practices in lessons and around the school. Their involvement in sport and mindfulness in selecting nutritious food contribute to healthy living. Students integrate well into community life and take part in several local functions. They are prepared well for life after they leave school. Their understanding of business is developing well and the students' own horticultural enterprise is already proving to be a successful venture.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching has improved since last year when results were very low, and it is now satisfactory in both key stages. This is chiefly due to the recruitment of new staff with specialist knowledge that matches the courses they teach, and the extensive monitoring of teaching by senior and middle managers. Basic classroom routines are now fairly well established. Lessons are planned well, with the objectives of each lesson shared with the students so that they know what they will learn. In most classrooms behaviour and relationships are good enough for productive teaching to occur. In some classes a very positive atmosphere encourages students to make mature contributions, although a few classes are still difficult to handle. The improved teaching explains why the students are making faster progress and enjoy coming to school, but teaching needs to be even better if students are to make the faster progress required for them to reach their targets.

The conditions are now right for the teaching to move on and stretch the students more. Expectations are high in some lessons but, in too many, the students are not sufficiently enthused or given the chance to work independently and think for themselves. In some cases they are not set enough work to do on their own outside the classroom. The quality of marking is variable and students are not always sufficiently clear about what they must do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. An appropriate range of learning opportunities is provided for the vast majority of students, including those with special educational needs and those who have particular gifts or talents. It is less successful for the broad group of potentially higher attaining students who are not always challenged well enough by the tasks provided. Good additional experiences, including lunchtime and after school clubs, are well attended.

In Key Stage 3, students have a broad and balanced curriculum, which they enjoy. They are particularly enthused by the swimming sessions and by the opportunities to play a musical instrument. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has recently been improved through the introduction of a better combination of courses, which enables students to choose those most suited to their needs and preferences. A range of vocational courses is provided in partnership with local colleges of further education. Students enjoy these options and feel they are helping to prepare them for life after school. Good links with the youth service are providing valued opportunities within the school and the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good. Students say that they feel happy and safe. The peer mentoring system and the mixed aged tutor groups contribute significantly to the positive relationships that generally exist between students. There are effective procedures for supporting and managing students with behavioural problems.

Good links with external agencies enable the school to draw on a range of expertise to support students' emotional health and well-being. The systems for child protection are sound and all new staff receive training in this area. The arrangements for providing Year 9 students with appropriate options advice and careers guidance are satisfactory and improving. The school's close links with local colleges contribute to the good staying on rate into further education.

A new system for keeping track of students' academic progress provides teachers with good information. However, teachers are still learning how to make the most effective use of it to let students know how to improve their work. Since the last inspection, considerable progress has been made in the provision for students with learning difficulties. Individual education action plans are now of good quality and are kept up to date.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher was appointed during the second year that the school was in special measures. She has continued to provide good leadership and management through a

difficult period in the school's history. A completely new senior leadership team was established in September 2005 and it has already demonstrated it is capable of bringing about improvement. A more rigorous system of monitoring teaching and learning has been introduced. Subject leaders are now held more accountable for the progress of their students. Improvements have been made in the provision for students with learning difficulties. More subjects now have coordinators and nearly all lessons are taught by subject specialists. A more appropriate curriculum has been established at Key Stage 4.

These improvements, together with good support from governors and the local authority, are starting to have a positive impact on standards and achievement. The school is able to produce convincing evidence of better progress being made by students in Year 11 and this was confirmed by inspectors. Exclusions have fallen dramatically and attendance has continued to rise so that it is now above the national average for secondary schools.

The management and leadership of subjects have been strengthened but there is still some way to go. Some key appointments are still to be made and there is variation in the effectiveness of subject coordinators in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their departments.

The school has drawn on a range of evidence to develop a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and to identify priorities for improvement. This has included making use of the information gathered through its intensive programme of lesson monitoring and drawing on the views of parents, students and others with an interest in the school. The local authority provides a thorough evaluation of the school's work and governors are actively involved in monitoring performance by being attached to particular areas of the curriculum.

Careful control of the school's finances has meant that it is on course to balance its budget this year, having been in deficit in previous years. The school makes good use of its resources but is not providing value for money because the standard of education is inadequate.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Students,

We were very pleased to meet and talk to so many of you when we inspected your college. Your contributions helped to give us a better understanding of the work of the college. We enjoyed our visit and appreciated the friendly and courteous welcome you gave us. We wanted to give you a brief summary of our findings.

We found much that you and your teachers are right to be proud of. However, too many of you do not make fast enough progress to gain the test and examination results you are capable of achieving. Results in mathematics are very good and there is no reason why you should not do as well in other subjects. Many of you told us that you enjoyed coming to college and this is reflected in your good attendance. We also agree that the school looks after you well and provides good guidance and support. We were impressed by many aspects of your personal development. Your headteacher and other senior members of staff provide good leadership and have made a number of important improvements. They are well supported by the college's governors. The college has developed some good links with the community and with local organisations to help support your education.

What could be improved

- The progress you make and the results you achieve, especially in Key Stage 4 and in science.
- Some lessons need to be more interesting and challenging and you need to be encouraged to work independently and think more for yourselves.
- You need more help with knowing how to improve your work.
- Some subjects are managed well but others are less so and we want to see these improved.

We believe that your headteacher and teachers will be able to make these improvements and we hope you will contribute and benefit from them. Inspectors will be returning to the school to check on the progress being made.

Yours sincerely,

David Butler HMI (Lead Inspector)