

# Birley Community College

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107146
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	287727
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marianne Young 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr A Brook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr A Vicars
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Thornbridge Avenue Sheffield South Yorkshire S12 3AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0114 2392531
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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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## Amended Report Addendum

Effective tracking systems enable teachers to spot underachievement quickly and take prompt action to remedy weakness. 23/10 Various

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Birley Community College is a slightly larger than average comprehensive school. It serves a socially and economically less advantaged area in the south eastern outskirts of Sheffield. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There is also a below average proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have a statement of special educational need. The large majority of students are White British. The school has been a specialist technology college since 2001 and in 2006 was awarded The Healthy Schools Standard. Recently the school achieved the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Financial Management Standard.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Birley Community College is an improving school that provides a satisfactory standard of education. There have been some noteworthy improvements, especially in the extensive choice of subjects for students in Years 10 and 11. Students' personal development and the care provided for them are good, and there has been a significant improvement in the number of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C level. The headteacher has a high profile around the school and is well known by the students. His leadership is responsible for the shared sense of common purpose that permeates the senior leadership group. He is ably supported by his senior colleagues and by governors who are the school's enthusiastic advocates.

Standards and achievement are satisfactory. Progress has improved for students in Years 10 and 11 because the curriculum is better matched to their individual needs. However, standards in English and mathematics are below average at GCSE level. This is because students have not made the progress of which they are capable in these subjects, between Years 7 to 9, for some time. Evidence from lesson observations and students' books indicate that progress is now satisfactory, although pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and boys from the higher ability group at Key Stage 3, make good progress. Most students are polite to visitors; they socialise well and enjoy their learning. However, there is some inattention by some students in lessons, especially when they are not encouraged to contribute to their learning, and also some boisterous behaviour in the corridors. Attendance is improving and is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The challenge facing the school is to bring all teaching to the standard of the best. Where this occurs students make good progress in lessons. The curriculum is good with some excellent features in the arrangements for students in Years 10 and 11. The pathways offered to these students enable them to choose from an extensive range of subjects, including vocational courses both in school and at college. In 2006, many more students continued their education beyond the age of 16, than was the case in previous years. The care and support afforded to students are excellent. Systems and procedures are in place to identify students who need support both academically and pastorally. This work contributes strongly to the personal development of all students and especially for vulnerable students. Effective tracking systems enable teachers to spot underachievement quickly and take prompt action to remedy weakness.

Senior leaders have a good knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of learning drawn from a well constructed evaluation programme. However, their judgements are often more positive than those of the inspection team. Governance is good and governors have a good understanding of the school's work. They share the commitment to developing the school's role within the community. The school's specialist status enables the school to work effectively with others to share developing practice, for instance, the curriculum development in Years 10 and 11.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' progress in English and mathematics especially in Years 7 to 9.- - Increase the proportion of good and better teaching.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

By the time students leave the school at the age of 16 their standards of attainment are broadly in line with the national average. Students generally make satisfactory progress, although students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and boys from the higher ability group at Key Stages 3-4, make good progress. Progress has improved for students in Years 10 and 11 because the curriculum is well suited to individual needs. There has been a noticeable improvement in the number of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C level. An 18 percentage point improvement since 2003 has brought these results in line with that expected nationally by students in Year 11. Standards attained are, however, below the national average when English and mathematics are included. There has been little improvement in this measure for the past three years.

Standards at Key Stage 3 are below average. Although standards in mathematics improved in 2006, overall there has been a slight downward trend during the last three years. Standards in English have fluctuated from year to year. Progress, especially by boys, has been inadequate. However, the tracking by the school of students' progress indicates that progress is now satisfactory. Lesson observations confirm this. The more rigorous intervention system used by subject leaders is ensuring that previous underachievement is being tackled systematically, and improvement is linked to beneficial changes in the curriculum. For instance, the 'nurture groups' for less able students in Year 7 place a strong emphasis on improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students describe the school as 'a close community', where they feel happy to learn. This is reflected in their improving attendance. Rising attendance rates are close to the national average. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory and students value the system of rewards and sanctions. Students behave best when tasks in lessons are challenging and expectations are high. However, instances of more boisterous behaviour occur at break and lunchtimes when fewer adults supervise recreational areas. Students say that there are good systems to address any bullying. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's strong moral code permeates all aspects of the school and is evident in the respect most students' show for adults and their peers. Students make increasingly positive contributions to the wider community through their involvement in local projects and with their partner school in Zanzibar. They have, however, a more limited understanding of what it means to live in modern, multicultural Britain. Many students participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities and are proud to take responsibility around school, as school councillors, for example. Students express confidence in the effectiveness of the school council and provide examples of the impact some of their decisions have had in improving the quality of life in school. For example, calming music enhances the dining experience for students.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There is also some good and outstanding teaching that leads to students making rapid progress. However, weaknesses in learning are present in some lessons, for instance, where progress is too often limited by students not being expected or enabled to take a more active part, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics. In some cases this leads to pupils showing a lack of enjoyment, or doing tasks with a restricted understanding. In the better lessons, students are challenged through well-phrased questions from their teachers. Students then receive rapid reward and encouragement through the teachers' use of praise. An increasing use of computer-linked technology is helping teachers to enliven their lessons. Teachers are generally confident and knowledgeable about their subjects and relationships are good. Across the school, lessons are generally pitched at the students' present levels of attainment and they are helped to understand the stage at which they are working. Regular checks on students' progress are made, and in many classes marking is directly linked to students' targets. Nonetheless, sometimes marking is cursory and students' targets are not stretching enough.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum offered by the school is good with some excellent features. In Years 10 and 11 students are able to follow a very well designed set of pathways that lead to appropriate accreditation. This curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of the students and is leading to improved attainment. There is an outstanding choice of vocational courses at different levels that leads to students continuing in education after they leave the school. As a result very few pupils do not continue in education, employment or training after the age of 16. The school monitors the effectiveness of the vocational courses and appropriately makes adjustments to ensure that students are gaining success. However, many students in Years 10 and 11 and a few pupils in Years 8 and 9 do not have access to two hours of physical education, and this does not help them develop healthy lifestyles. The school has a good range of lunchtime and after school clubs, but at present does not monitor how many and which students are involved in these activities. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 provides appropriate study in all of the national curriculum subjects and is now beginning to develop further the range of subjects offered to students, including some Key Stage 4 courses. Curriculum project days have been introduced for all students and the younger ones, in particular, commented on how enjoyable these days have been. Through these days the school is developing a 'learning to learn' programme. This is helping students build up a wider range of skills planned to help them understand how to learn on their own, and to develop other skills that will be of benefit to them in later life.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school's caring and inclusive ethos is impressive and establishes a very positive learning environment. Students respect their teachers who provide good role models. Child protection procedures are in place and followed. Current requirements for safeguarding students' well-being are met. Very effective systems support the transition of Year 7 students when they move on

from primary education and this helps them to settle well. Well-judged emotional and social support from learning mentors support students' strong personal development. Adults know their students well. Excellent provision in the personalised learning base and 'home room' ensures more vulnerable students are able to follow and complete academic and personal support programmes within a safe environment. This has a very positive impact on their progress. Students say, 'I like how the school's changed because I learn a lot more now.' Similarly, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support and guidance to help them succeed in their learning. The school has a newly established system of assessment and tracking of students' progress. More frequent reviews ensure students are increasingly kept on track in terms of their academic and personal development, although the impact of the newly embedded systems is still to be seen. The school communicates well with parents and ensures they are involved in their children's learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school, including its governance, are good. The headteacher has built a strong and effective senior leadership group. He sets a clear direction for the school in response to the needs of all students. Examples are the curriculum changes for students in Years 10 and 11 and the developing links with the community and other partners. The senior team and other staff are encouraged to lead whole school initiatives and to take responsibility for the development of various projects, for instance, the coaching programme for some teachers. This programme, linked to teachers' professional development and performance management, is being well received by those involved. It is, however, too early to judge the overall impact of the work, as it is focused on raising standards. The well managed and effective departmental reviews clearly identify priorities for individual subject areas and how they can reflect and promote whole school plans. Senior managers are becoming rigorous in their evaluation of performance and in taking action to remedy weaknesses, for instance, students' progress in English and mathematics. They know their school well; however, judgements in terms of effectiveness are slightly over generous. Forward planning is good. The priorities for development are appropriate and centre on providing high quality care and education, leading to improved standards. The governors also know the school well and play their part in shaping its future direction. Improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the tracking and assessment of students' progress, is good. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the welcome you extended to us during our recent visit and the time many of you gave to talk to us about your school and the various activities available to you outside lessons. It was clear that many of you enjoy the 'ACE' days and the new ways of learning and working with others during these days. Those of you in Years 10 and 11 were very positive about the increased choice of subjects now available. Most of you behave well in and out of lessons; however, some of you are inconsiderate to others by pushing past and running along corridors.

You tell us that you enjoy lessons when you are challenged to think for yourselves, when you have to find things out, and when you have to work with others on problems and come up with possible solutions. You like to do things, to discuss and argue about ideas. The best teaching makes these demands on you and we saw some examples of this when we were in your school. Your teachers are looking at the different ways that you approach learning and are developing their teaching to match. This is a priority for the school.

At the moment many of you, especially in Years 7 to 9, do not make enough progress in English and mathematics. New systems are now in place to check on how well you are doing and to provide guidance and the support you need when weaknesses are spotted. This improvement must continue as a priority for the school.

Thank you again for showing your school off to us. We wish you all every success for the future.