



Thomas Peacocke Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114596
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 295391
Inspection dates 14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	The Grove
School category	Community		Rye
Age range of pupils	11–16		TN31 7NQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01797 222545
Number on roll (school)	630	Fax number	01797 224343
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Elizabeth Baldwin
		Headteacher	Ann Cockerham
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006		

Age group 11–16	Inspection dates 14–15 March 2007	Inspection number 295391
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Thomas Peacocke Community College is a small, rural school. It is designated for students aged 11-18 but there is currently no post-16 provision. After a significant fall in the number on roll there has been an increase in students joining Year 7 for the last three years. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. In collaboration with the local authority the college is involved in the development of a new primary school on its site and the creation of a children's centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Thomas Peacocke Community College provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education because action is taken to ensure continuous improvement. Consequently, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Standards are rising. Examination results in 2006 improved significantly and, whilst standards at the end of Year 11 are below average, achievement is satisfactory because the vast majority of students have made satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Personal development is good. Students are well looked after. They appreciate the opportunities available to them. Most are well behaved and mature as responsible citizens with a commitment to improving the community of the school. This is reflected in supportive relationships and increasingly positive attitudes to learning. Above average attendance is testament to students' enjoyment of their education and symptomatic of their growing self-belief. The good curriculum offers students appropriate courses. The range available has been extended to provide greater flexibility and choice. This is helping to motivate students and provide pathways to further education, training and employment. The college's development of extended provision is increasing community involvement and raising aspirations.

Robust systems for monitoring are improving the satisfactory teaching and learning. However, not all teachers and teaching assistants give sufficient emphasis to evaluating students' learning in lessons so that they can intervene where necessary and accelerate progress. Some lessons are over-directed by teachers and do not enable students to gain the skills to become independent learners. Assessment information is being used satisfactorily in most subjects to set appropriate targets for students. Students' overall performance is not always tracked sufficiently well. This means the college sometimes fails to pick up quickly enough on students doing less well in some subjects than others.

Leadership and management are good overall but strongest at senior level. The principal's clear-sighted and unflagging belief in a better future has been central to overcoming the challenges faced by the school. The difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff have been surmounted and some key strengths now characterise the school. It has an accurate view of its performance based on secure evidence. Effective teamwork, including that of the governors, has created good capacity for continuous improvement. The school works productively with the local community and parents to promote students' achievement and well-being. Care, guidance and support are good. The school is quite rightly growing in popularity as it realises its vision for a learning community where the achievement of every individual matters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure individual students' progress is monitored across subjects so that any variation in performance can be quickly identified.

- Extend teachers' and teaching assistants' expertise in evaluating and building on students' progress in lessons.
- Develop the learning and thinking skills that enable students to work independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

GCSE results in summer 2006 show considerable improvement over those for summer 2005, when achievement was significantly lower than expected. Because of these better results, the school was rated the most improved in East Sussex. The school exceeded its target for the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades and, although this is below the national figure, it represents satisfactory progress for these students since entry to the school. Performance in national tests over the last three years, although variable across the subjects, shows an upward trend with students achieving satisfactorily.

Different groups of students perform equally well and, although girls do better than boys, the difference is not as great as that nationally. There is the potential for more students to achieve the highest grades at GCSE and in national tests for 14 year olds.

Observations of lessons and the school's regular assessment of student progress indicate that the improvement in standards has been maintained this school year. Students' progress in English and science has particularly improved following the appointment of new and enthusiastic subject leaders and more specialist staff. Intervention strategies within subject areas ensure that students who are underachieving are identified and given support. However, achievement is still variable across different subjects and the school recognises the need to address this by continuing to improve teaching and learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The college judges the personal development and well-being of the students to be good and inspectors agree. Attendance levels have steadily improved and are better than the national average. Students say that the variety in lessons and the positive encouragement by the staff makes the college a happy place in which to learn.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually good. Exclusions have fallen over the last two years because more effective ways have been found to support those students experiencing difficulties. Younger students quickly settle in to the college because of the close relationship with primary schools and the support they receive from adults and peer mentors. Students throughout the college feel that they are safe; that bullying is not a significant problem and that good systems are in place to deal with the occasional problem.

Members of the elected college council have made a difference. They are pleased with the way in which they help to organise charity events and manage their own finances. Students know that their views are sought and listened to through the council and

through surveys. They feel that they have participated in recent improvements and are given appropriate responsibilities.

Students are well aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The canteen is more popular now that it serves healthy food and students are consulted about the catering. There are plenty of lessons and clubs which encourage physical activities. Students' readiness for economic well-being is fostered through the good advice given to help them make the right decisions about Key Stage 4 courses, further education or training, and employment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers have developed an ethos which encourages, praises and rewards responsible behaviour. Students make good contributions to the community and there are many opportunities for them to improve college life. Students relate well across all ages and enjoy the teamwork and competition fostered through the house system. A high value is placed on expressive arts, and the superb student artwork on display throughout the school is respected and enjoyed by everyone.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. This matches the school's own judgement, which is informed by a well thought out monitoring programme that identifies areas for development. Good action is taken to address weaknesses and, as a result, the proportion of good or better lessons is rising. The most effective lessons are well planned and delivered at a good pace. Objectives are clear and meet a wide range of learning needs and, as a result, students settle willingly to the tasks set. They enjoy and respond particularly well to learning activities that allow them to work together and develop their own ideas. In such situations, they make good progress. Where progress is satisfactory, students are not always as fully engaged in the learning process. This is shown by a reluctance of some students to participate in discussion or to take responsibility for working things out for themselves. Learning objectives are not as precise as they could be and sufficient time is not always left at the end of the lesson to revisit them and check the students' learning. Students' work is regularly marked but feedback to students on how well they are doing and what to do to improve varies from the informative and helpful to a tick. Whilst teaching assistants provide valuable support in withdrawal situations, teachers do not always use them as effectively as they might in lessons, particularly to evaluate student progress and achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is clearly driven by students' needs and is good. Some aspects at Key Stage 4 are outstanding. The range of vocational and work-related experiences the college offers contributes significantly to students' motivation and self-esteem. All

students choose from a wide range of both academic and vocational courses. They also benefit from very good liaison with other institutions in the Hastings consortium, and especially with Hastings College and Plumpton College. This ensures a smooth transition into further education or employment. Opportunities to participate in a variety of enterprise projects mean that students are well prepared for future economic well-being. There is good support for literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across subjects. A high proportion of students take up the many opportunities for extra experience in music, drama, sport, and community involvement. A number of master classes are available to the gifted and talented.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support given to students are good and contribute significantly to the strength of their personal development. Students and parents praise what the college does in this area. Students are well cared for and have ready access to personal help and advice. There is a wealth of provision from teachers, teaching assistants, youth development staff and from fellow students specifically trained to be peer mentors. The quality of the relationships in the college means that students feel listened to. One boy said, 'You feel appreciated here.' Students know whether they are reaching their targets for learning because progress is regularly reviewed at the end of each unit of work. However, they are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.

There is close cooperation with the youth development service which provides many activities and programmes of study to help students make healthy life choices. These help to forge good links between the college and the town. This is reinforced through regular multi-agency meetings which result in well coordinated support for vulnerable students and their families.

There are good arrangements for safeguarding students in lessons and around the college. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education teaches students how to take responsibility for their safety and that of others. Child protection arrangements and health and safety checks meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The improved quality of leadership throughout the college is driving the development of teaching and learning and the consequent rise in achievement. The principal provides strong leadership; she is finely tuned to the performance of the school at every level and makes perceptive judgements about what the school must do to continue improving. She is well supported by an effective senior leadership team and a dedicated governing body. Together, they have developed a sense of common purpose among staff and built good, collaborative working relationships. Robust self-evaluation gives an accurate picture of the college's strengths and areas for development. The systematic

approach to reviewing the performance of individuals and groups of students is accelerating progress and raising standards. The college recognises the need to track achievement across the curriculum so that variation in performance is quickly identified and tackled. It is also aware that sharing the characteristics of the good leadership of subjects is another key to further improvement in achievement. There are high expectations of all staff supported by an appropriately tailored programme of training.

Governors know the school well and hold it to account for its performance. They play a strategic role in development and monitor progress with the school improvement plan through their links with curriculum areas and subject reviews.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards and achievement have improved significantly; the proportion of good teaching is increasing; leadership is strongly focused on students' progress and the developing curriculum is increasingly responsive to the needs of students and the wider community. The school is well placed to keep moving forward.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
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 making us welcome when we visited your college recently. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your openness and cooperation. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection. Your parents or carers will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it.

Your college is improving and providing a satisfactory education. Your principal, the senior team and governors are spreading their good leadership throughout the college. You are also getting the message and taking more responsibility for your learning. Your behaviour has really improved. You are growing in confidence and rightly believe you can help to make the college even better. You expect more from yourselves and are putting the pressure on the few who have not woken up to the importance of having the right attitude to learning, to mend their ways quickly. Not surprisingly, examination results are getting better along with your attendance. Well done and please note the connection between successful learning and going to college every day!

Staff have worked successfully to get the curriculum right for you. You mostly enjoy your lessons. There are some good opportunities and you are now able to choose from a wide range of subjects in Key Stage 4. We could see that you all get a chance to do enjoyable activities out of lessons. Your college is a caring and supportive place. Relationships are strong and you say you feel safe and valued.

The most important thing to concentrate on now is helping you to learn. We have asked staff to:

- become more expert in assessing and building on your progress in lessons
- track your progress across different subjects
- help you to develop the skills to learn independently.

Everyone wants Thomas Peacocke College to keep on improving. We think if you keep working and learning together, you will do just that.