

# Birley Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107146
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	336820
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan McKenna

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	1184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Eric Holmes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Harry Wood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Thornbridge Avenue Birley Sheffield S12 3AB
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<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@birleycc.vlemail.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors spent over 14 hours observing teaching and learning, visiting 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers, and also looked at students' work. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including data about students' progress, records of monitoring, policies, action plans and the 95 questionnaires returned by parents.

- the attainment and progress of all groups of students across the school, especially in mathematics and for higher attaining students
- the extent to which teaching, the use of assessment information and the curriculum are ensuring that all groups of students learn well enough
- the quality of support and guidance provided for students and the impact on their personal outcomes
- the extent to which leaders at all levels are improving the school and demonstrating capacity to improve it further
- the impact the federation arrangements are having on the school's effectiveness.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average school and almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school runs an integrated resource for students with communication needs or who have autistic spectrum disorder and so the proportion with statements of special educational needs is above average.

In September 2009, the school became part of a hard federation with the primary school on the same campus. An executive headteacher is responsible for both schools in the hard federation. A secondary phase leader is responsible for the day- to-day management of the secondary school. It is a specialist technology college.

**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

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Birley Community College is a good school that is serving its students well. All aspects of provision are good and students are progressing well academically and personally. The executive headteacher and secondary phase leader, along with other senior leaders and governors, have a clear vision of the school's role in helping students reach their full potential. This has been communicated well to other staff, and there is a shared sense of responsibility and collective commitment. The successful management systems that were in existence prior to the federation have been continued, and these enable the school to operate effectively. Well established monitoring and evaluation by leaders mean that the school's strengths and areas requiring further development are accurately identified and well understood. That the latter are tackled effectively is demonstrated by the good rate of improvement made since the last inspection. Inevitably, the federation arrangements are at early stages of implementation. As a result of careful planning, the transition is progressing smoothly. It is too soon for the potential benefits of the federation to have been realised fully, but positive work is taking place and there are some initial encouraging developments in provision. The school is well placed to build further on this work and is demonstrating a good capacity to improve further.

Students enter the school with below average standards. They achieve well during their time in school and they reach broadly average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 11. On some measures, such as the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at good grades, results are above average. Attainment in English is average, however, and in mathematics it is below average. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well. The good curriculum and quality of teaching contribute well to students' rate of progress. Achievement in mathematics is not as strong as it should be because the teaching of the subject does not ensure that student's understanding is systematically developed. More able students do not achieve the highest grades in examinations in all subjects because they are not always given challenging enough work. Initiatives undertaken through the specialism are helping to develop interest and raise standards in design and technology.

Arrangements for caring and supporting students are well conceived and implemented, and the extra help given to students with additional needs is very effective. This helps students feel safe, comfortable and happy in school. Students behave well, have good relationships with each other, work hard in lessons and participate well in the extra activities on offer. Their attendance is above average.

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

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- Raise students' attainment and improve their achievement by:
- - ensuring that students' understanding of key concepts in mathematics are systematically promoted so they can build progressively on their knowledge in subsequent work
- - rigorously evaluating students' outcomes in mathematics so that all of the reasons for their underperformance in the subject are accurately identified and effectively tackled
- - ensuring that more able students are challenged sufficiently and enabled to reach the high standards they are capable of in all subjects.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
- - ensuring that work in all lessons is closely matched to the different needs of students
- - ensuring that students' understanding is checked by teachers so that inaccuracies or misunderstandings are identified and corrected.
- Develop the links and opportunities created by the federation to ensure that it has a positive impact on the provision made for students and on their outcomes.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Students come to school keen to learn and to do well. They do as they are asked in lessons and apply themselves well to their work. They get actively involved in their learning, especially when lessons provide opportunities for them to work collaboratively with others. They enjoy discussing issues and pooling their knowledge to increase their understanding. Detailed targets and teachers' explanations of the criteria for reaching different GCSE grades help students to have a good understanding of what they need to do to reach the next steps in their learning and to take some responsibility for this. They make good gains in knowledge and understanding overall. The learning of more able students is less effective when work does not provide enough challenge for them. On occasions, when the key concepts underpinning tasks are not clearly explained, students may complete the tasks set but their learning is superficial and this restricts their progress over time. This is most commonly seen in mathematics. Action to improve the quality of teaching together with targeted intervention for individuals and groups of students is helping to raise standards and increase students' rate of progress. The school sets challenging targets, including in the specialist subjects, and it meets most of them; in 2009, they were not met in mathematics.

Student's good social and moral development is seen in the harmonious atmosphere and relationships within the school, and by their preparedness to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. The students' voice within school is strong. Students' independence and sense of responsibility are developing well through, for example, leading student teams, leading sports activities in primary schools, being involved in consultations with the community and taking assemblies. These activities help to develop their confidence and maturity. Such qualities, along with the experiences they gain through visits to businesses, local universities and work placements prepare them well for the future. Links with schools with students from other cultures in both England

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and other parts of the world are helping to develop students' cultural awareness. Students have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay safe. Most students willingly meet school expectations in regard to their conduct and behaviour, with just a small minority, mainly boys, occasionally not doing so.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching has a range of positive features that help students learn well. A common lesson planning format is used which helps to promote consistency of practice. Teachers' plans include detail of what students need to learn, of how lessons will be structured and the activities to be used to promote their active involvement. These plans are generally implemented well, resulting in fast paced, enjoyable and effective lessons. Teachers give clear details to students about what they need to be able to do to reach different grades, so students can take on some responsibility for their own learning. Students' learning is usually checked well throughout and at the end of lessons so teachers can plan to build on it and develop it further. There are examples of outstanding teaching where input is particularly dynamic with a high level of interaction

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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between students and teachers. In these cases questioning is used very effectively to extend students' thinking. Some lessons are less effective than the majority. One reason is that all students are given identical work, irrespective of their different ability. This particularly disadvantages the more able in classes. Another is that sometimes teachers rely too much on students' assessing their own or each others' learning rather than doing so themselves. Occasionally, especially in mathematics, tasks do not promote deep enough understanding that can be carried forward to future work. In the large majority of lessons, students show good attitudes to learning and take pride in doing well. In the less effective lessons attention wanders and there is occasional low level disruption.

The curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' good learning. Innovative approaches and projects are helping to secure students' interest, promote engagement and improve their achievement. The 'Individuals and Society' course in Key Stage 3 promotes cross-curricular links well and is used as a vehicle to promote literacy across other subjects. The 'STEM' (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) project is effectively promoting a wider interest in, and understanding of, the specialist subjects. The range of curriculum pathways and the increasing amount of personalised approaches available at Key Stage 4 are meeting students' needs well, and are contributing to rising standards and attendance. Several specific programmes are being used to good effect to promote students' personal development. A wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is broadening students' interests and widening their experiences. The mathematics curriculum is not being delivered as effectively as other subjects as it is not ensuring systematic acquisition of key concepts.

Students' well-being and safety are taken very seriously and thorough and effective arrangements are in place to care for all students, especially those with additional needs, such as the students in the integrated resource. Teams of staff get to know students well and take steps to ensure their needs are met so they can participate fully in school life. Good communication between teams monitoring students' academic and personal development reduces the chances of any student falling through the net. The integrated resource and personalised learning base provide safe havens for vulnerable students. Close liaison with outside agencies extends the range of specialist support available to help meet students' needs. Guidance given to students on entry to school, at key points within it and in preparation for their transition to their post-16 stage is effective. There are plans to further strengthen aspects through the federation, such as students' preparation for entering into Year 7 and increasing the involvement of parents.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<p><b>The quality of teaching</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>

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<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>
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## How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of the leadership and management is seen in the fact all aspects of provision are good and are leading to good outcomes for students. There is no complacency and leaders have a strong desire to continue to improve the quality of education for all students. There is a commitment to ensuring that the federation arrangements add value for all students, and a clear strategy is in place to promote this. The executive headteacher, chair of governors and other key personnel are fast building up their cross-phase knowledge and expertise. The governing body is newly constituted in light of the federation and so governance is in a state of transition. Nevertheless, key governors know the secondary school very well and are providing both good support and effective challenge through asking searching questions of it.

Innovative approaches are adopted to bring about improvement, including involvement in external projects and professional development and a good level of support and coaching within the school. One area where leaders have had less success than most is in improving mathematics, because the quality of provision has been considered without sufficient reference to its impact on students' achievement. This is beginning to be tackled with renewed vigour. The school is a cohesive community within which students are valued as individuals and equal opportunities are promoted well. Outcomes for all and different groups of students are tracked carefully and analysed in detail, with action taken to reduce gaps identified. The school works well with a wide range of external agencies to meet students' needs and to broaden provision. It engages and works effectively in partnership with parents. The school is taking positive steps to develop links regionally and internationally. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. In view of its positive outcomes and balanced budget, the school is providing good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Views of parents and carers**

A relatively small number of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Of those that did the large majority have positive views of the school. Inspectors agree with these. The aspect attracting the largest number of negative responses was about the extent to which the school helps children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors judge that the school does promote healthy lifestyles well and helps students to understand how to keep healthy, although leaders plan to develop this further.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birley Community College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	31	61	64	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	20	21	69	73	6	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	29	65	68	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	38	53	56	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	28	29	61	64	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	20	60	63	10	11	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	8	66	69	17	18	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	24	60	63	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	23	67	71	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	19	58	61	6	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	13	60	63	9	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	18	67	71	4	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	31	64	67	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

# Glossary

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



3 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Birley Community College, Sheffield, S12 3AB

Thank you for being so welcoming when my colleagues and I visited your school this week and for talking with us, answering our questions and showing us your work. I am writing to tell you about our judgements.

I am delighted to be able to tell you that Birley Community College is a good school. All aspects of its provision are good. There are effective arrangements in place for caring, supporting and guiding you and for keeping you safe. Staff check on how well you are getting on, so they know what help you need. Those students who have additional needs receive particularly helpful extra support. Effective steps are taken to promote your personal development. You have good relationships with each other, behave well and attend regularly. You work hard and develop your interests and skills by participating in the wide range of activities that the school provides for you.

The curriculum and teaching are good and you achieve well. The school is involved in several innovative projects to improve your progress. Most lessons enable you to learn well because you get good input from your teachers and you get actively involved in tasks. A minority of lessons are less effective because work is not matched closely to your needs and teachers do not check your understanding enough. We have asked the school to make sure more lessons are good and help you learn well. You do not make as much progress in mathematics as in your other subjects and we have asked the school to take action to improve this. We have also asked it to make sure that those of you who are capable of reaching the highest grades at GCSE are given challenging work to enable you to do so in all subjects.

Your school's leaders are working hard and successfully to improve your school. We have asked that they build on the new federation with the primary school to help make your school even more effective. You can help by continuing to work hard and trying to benefit from everything the school offers you. I send you and your teachers very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ms Joan McKenna

Lead inspector

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