

Rye College

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114596 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 338412 |
| Inspection dates | 9–10 June 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Anne Duffy |

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

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|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 702 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ian Ross |
| Headteacher | Ann Cockerham |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 March 2007 |
| School address | The Grove Rye TN31 7NQ |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 33 lessons or parts of lessons, and 28 teachers, as well as two sessions in the Nursery. Inspectors also held meetings with staff, students and governors, including two parent governors. They observed the college's work, and looked at documentation and policies, including the tracking of students' progress, the college improvement plan and arrangements for safeguarding. They also studied student and staff questionnaires and the 129 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of action taken to raise attainment and remove any difference in progress made across different subjects, and between different groups
- the impact of specialist school status upon school improvement
- the consistency with which leadership at all levels impacts upon continuing school improvement
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery.

Information about the school

Rye College is smaller than most secondary schools and is the only maintained secondary school in the town of Rye. Previously called Thomas Peacocke Community College, it celebrated its centenary in September 2008 when it changed its name. The college shares a site with a neighbouring primary school and also a sports centre, for which it shares management responsibility. The governor-run Pugwash Nursery has recently moved into a new building which is on the site. The college also provides adult education for members of its own, and the wider, community. Most students who attend the college are from White British backgrounds; around 3% are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. Around 10% of students are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than normally found.

The school has specialist status for the arts and holds a number of awards including the gold Artsmark. During the past year there have been some absences within the senior leadership team, including the long-term absence of an assistant principal.

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

'They're doing stuff that makes it better all the time.' This view from a student forms a very apt summary of this good college which has been on a trajectory of improvement since its last inspection. Aply led by the principal, the college has placed itself firmly as a key player in the town and offers a wide range of creative and other experiences through which students, as well as members of the community, can learn and develop.

Extremely good use has been made of the college's specialist status to develop partnership links, to achieve the Artsmark gold award, and to provide a model for innovative practice across the college. Well-thought-out changes to the curriculum have provided students with increased opportunities to extend their interests. As one student said, 'You have lots of opportunities to gain insight about what you want to do and a chance to do well in the future.' Despite the limitations placed upon it by the age of most of the building, the college has managed to create an environment in which learning, creativity and aspiration are evident and celebrated. The new provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage offers good quality experiences within a very spacious and attractive environment. Changes made to the structure of the college staff have been very effective and, despite some absences, senior and middle leadership teams show that they are more than capable of driving forward further improvement. Self-evaluation is thorough and detailed; processes for monitoring performance are robust and there are secure systems in place for monitoring and analysing all aspects of the college's work. As a result, ambition to improve is embedded at all levels and capacity to do so is evident.

Teaching has significant strengths and the college has taken effective steps to promote teachers' responsibility and accountability for the classes they teach. Although some short- and longer-term absences remain, well-focused support and improved stability among the teaching staff have helped to make progress across the range of subjects more secure. However, despite supporting good progress overall, the quality of teaching remains variable. Many teachers deliver lessons well but some teachers, particularly those who are less confident in their role, employ a more limited range of strategies and approaches. Planning is sound but information gained about students' progress by day-to-day assessment is not always used to support the delivery of lessons in a way that ensures all students are challenged to achieve as well as they can in every subject.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that planning and delivery of lessons across the school are sufficiently and consistently personalised to meet the needs of every student by:

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- ensuring that day-to-day assessment of students' progress consistently informs lesson planning
- ensuring that teachers employ a wide range of approaches and strategies to further encourage learning and progress.

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

Students' achievement is good. Their levels of attainment on entry are below average overall, but are generally in line with national averages when the students leave the college. The percentage of students gaining five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics is average and reflects a trend of improvement over the last three years. Although there remains some variability between subjects, work seen in lessons and in students' portfolios confirms the overall trend of improvement. Progress in English, which has historically lagged behind that of other subjects, has improved and continues to do so. The progress made by students in mathematics is significantly above average and places the college in the top percentile of all schools for this subject. The college is right in judging that students make good progress overall. Over the past year the college has taken effective action to ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not disadvantaged so that they make progress which is similar to that of other students. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, students made excellent progress because they were able to develop their confidence by making good use of practical resources. The college has also correctly identified a group of students for whom progress can be accelerated and is taking the right steps to offer challenge and support for this group.

Students are very proud of their college and appreciate the range of opportunities which it offers. This is reflected in their above-average attendance. Students appreciate the good relationships they have with members of staff and this adds to their feeling of safety within college. The very large majority of students are involved and enthusiastic and their motivation to succeed is evident. Their awareness of how much behaviour impacts upon learning has increased, so that they say, 'We've raised our expectations', and, 'I expect people to behave well now'. Students respond well to opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work, when they show an understanding of the level they are working at and what they might do to improve upon this. They respond well to the relaxed, yet professional, manner which many teachers adopt, although they are slightly less responsive where teaching is less confident.

Reflecting the college's Healthy School status, students demonstrate that they understand how to lead healthy lives. They speak highly of the opportunities which the college provides for them to participate and to voice their views. Initiatives, such as the creation of 'student researchers' and the strong student council, mean that students have many avenues in which to contribute to the community and make their opinions known. 'Everyone gets their fair share. You feel involved,' said one student. Their moral and social development is enhanced by assemblies and students benefit from opportunities to influence local issues, including meeting the Mayor. Links with many

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performing arts groups, as well as sporting and academic partnerships, provide them with opportunities in which their spiritual and cultural development is enriched. Work with professional artists for Rye carnival and participation in the 'Great Rye Scallop Sauce Challenge', also contribute extremely well to community and creative development. Whilst involvement in the 'Trash It!' project raises awareness of the sustainability agenda. Such events develop students' confidence effectively and students show themselves very willing to work together and support each other both in these situations and in lessons. Development of business partnerships with specific subject areas gives Key Stage 4 students a clear understanding of the relationship between the educational curriculum and the world of employment. Progress is underpinned by good work in mathematics and literacy and by the college's investment in information and communication technology. As a result, students develop useful skills that will support them when they are older.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 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 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

In addressing issues which arose from the last inspection, the college has rightly and

¹ 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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effectively focused upon promoting and developing the skills that students need for learning. A key element of this development has been the increasingly creative curriculum at Key Stage 3 which includes H2L (How to Learn) in Year 7 and cross-curricular delivery of GCSE expressive arts in Year 9. An enhanced vocational offer at Key Stage 4 includes a mixture of in-house provision, for GCSE photography and the level 2 Diploma in creative and media studies, and programmes delivered through external partnerships, such as the Foundation Diploma in land-based studies at a local college, and taster courses in construction and hair and beauty at another secondary school.

Teachers generally have secure subject knowledge and present lessons clearly, often making good use of well-prepared resources. The support from teaching assistants promotes the progress of students with learning needs well. In the best lessons, teachers plan a range of challenging activities for students and support them in making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. When lessons are well planned, good use is made of assessment information to provide activities which both challenge and engage the students. This was shown in a dance lesson, where Year 10 students worked individually and in pairs to evaluate their performances and to consider how they could improve, so that outstanding progress was made. However, this approach to lesson delivery is not yet consistent enough so that students' experiences vary and their rate of progress, while good overall, is variable across subjects.

There are thorough and effective arrangements in place for the care, guidance and support of students. A strong commitment to working with a range of agencies to sustain the learning, development and well-being of every student is evident. Transition for those joining and leaving the school is very well supported. Students say that they are listened to and feel confident in approaching staff with their problems, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically and, as far as possible, in confidence. They are aware of, and use, the peer-mentoring programme and talk positively about the house system which enables students from different year groups to support each other.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The progress made since the last inspection reflects a clear and shared ambition to succeed. The strong commitment to equality of opportunity, and drive to keep moving forward, are evident in the way in which the college has raised attainment and improved

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progress in a relatively short period of time. Governors are rightly proud of the college and share the principal's determination for its continuing development. The leadership and management team, including the governors, has a very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Together they have taken strategically focused action which has had evident impact. The staff as a whole share this commitment and the focus which all place on the needs of the students is evident and effective.

The school plays a significant role in its local community, and further afield, through its links with different performance groups in the United Kingdom and with a school in Ghana. It engages partners extremely effectively in order to benefit the students. It also works hard to involve parents and carers, through initiatives such as the 'parent voice' group. However, it is not complacent in this area and has plans to do even more to ensure that all parents and carers understand the steps the college is taking to improve for the benefit of the students. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust. All staff are well trained and the school identifies dangers well, fostering a realistic understanding of risk which helps students to keep themselves safe.

Resources are deployed well. The college has made full use of its specialist status and has used its community partnerships extremely well to provide improved accommodation and opportunities. It is now well placed to become even more innovative and fulfil its role, both within the community and as a specialist college, as a centre for learning of which the town can be proud.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

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Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress in the very attractive new premises of Pugwash Nursery. Children show great enjoyment of the many activities which are provided. There are many elements of good provision. The new building provides a stimulating, challenging and attractive environment and good use is made of resources. Good quality planning, tailored to the needs of each child, is well supported by observations used to record progress. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and the recent changes to the provision have been well led and effective.

Routines are well established and this enhances children's opportunities to be as independent as possible while feeling safe in and around the centre. Although free-flow between indoors and out is currently restricted by some lack of shade at mid-day, appropriate plans are in place to rectify this. Children form good relationships with their key workers and all the staff. They benefit from the close attention paid to their social, as well as their educational, needs. They enjoy playing, learning and exploring in the different areas.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of the questionnaire returns reflect the high level of satisfaction felt by parents and carers, and their appreciation of the support that the principal and staff offer both them and their children. Individual parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the impact that the school has had upon their children's well-being and progress, describing, for example, 'confident and self-assured young adults with a sense of worth and achievement'. The inspection team considered at some length the issues raised by parents and carers, including concerns about the promotion of healthy lifestyles and good behaviour. It considers that the school makes every effort to support each student in their development and to encourage good behaviour, although all concerned, including the students themselves, acknowledge that behaviour is best when lessons are interesting and teaching is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rye 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 129 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 742 pupils registered at the school and the Nursery.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 28 | 22 | 86 | 67 | 11 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 25 | 19 | 89 | 69 | 11 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 32 | 25 | 82 | 64 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 26 | 20 | 90 | 70 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 16 | 12 | 94 | 73 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 16 | 12 | 79 | 61 | 19 | 15 | 6 | 5 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 12 | 9 | 79 | 61 | 27 | 21 | 5 | 4 |
| 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) | 14 | 11 | 84 | 65 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 16 | 12 | 92 | 71 | 11 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 20 | 16 | 56 | 43 | 33 | 26 | 10 | 8 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 17 | 13 | 75 | 58 | 14 | 11 | 5 | 4 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 26 | 20 | 78 | 60 | 13 | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 22 | 17 | 89 | 69 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 2 |

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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 51 | 45 | 0 | 4 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 41 | 42 | 10 |
| Secondary schools | 8 | 34 | 44 | 14 |
| Sixth forms | 10 | 37 | 50 | 3 |
| Special schools | 32 | 38 | 25 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 12 | 43 | 31 | 14 |
| All schools | 9 | 40 | 40 | 10 |

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| 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.



11 June 2010

Dear Students and Children

Inspection of Rye College, Rye TN31 7NQ

Thank you very much for welcoming us to the college and to Pugwash Nursery. We really enjoyed our visit, particularly the chance to meet and talk to so many of you. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

We agree with you that the changes over the past few years have helped the college to improve, and we have judged that it provides you with a good education. The specialism in the arts is used very well and some thoughtful and exciting changes have been made to the curriculum. You told us about the range of interesting things there are for you to become involved in, both in and out of school. We saw that this has made a difference to your self-confidence and behaviour, which is generally good, and to your learning. You do increasingly well in external examinations and many of you work very hard indeed to achieve as well as you do. Good relationships contribute to you feeling safe and well supported in school. We were very impressed by how much you all contribute to your own and the wider community and we judged this contribution to be outstanding, along with the college's contribution to community cohesion.

Many of you told us about how much you enjoy learning in different subjects and we could see that this is so in many of your lessons. However, we think that some lessons are not always as well planned or delivered as they could be and we have asked your principal and the staff to look at this so that there is less variation in future.

The new building for Pugwash Nursery has made a real difference and the children who go there make good progress. The leadership of the nursery, like that of the college, is good and we could see that everyone is committed to improving things further. You can help by continuing to try your best. I wish you well for the future and I hope that you enjoy using the new dance and drama studio when it is finished.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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