

Thomas Estley Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120275
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339663
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Gwen Coates HMI

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	706
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernadette Shaw
Headteacher	Tim Moralee
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
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Age group	11–14
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Inspection number	339663

Registered childcare provision	Thomas Estley Children's Centre
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	66
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed parts of 35 lessons in the college as well as observing in the nursery and saw a similar number of teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. They observed the college's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including the college improvement plan, self-evaluation documents and external evaluation reports. The team analysed 310 parental questionnaires.

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

- The extent of gaps in achievement between different groups of students to determine whether interventions are having a positive impact.
- The quality of assessment and the extent to which students are aware of, and understand their targets, and how to improve their work.
- The consistency with which all teachers are able to challenge students' thinking and engage their interest.
- How effectively more vulnerable students are supported and what the impact of this support is on their achievements.
- The effectiveness of middle leadership in monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching and assessment.

Information about the school

Thomas Estley Community College is located in a rural area of Leicestershire. Its catchment area includes the villages of Broughton Astley, Whetstone and Cosby. Students join the college in Year 7, with almost all transferring from the six primary schools in these three villages. At the end of Year 9, the large majority of students transfer to Countesthorpe Community College and the rest to Lutterworth College. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic background and those for whom English is an additional language is well below the national average. While the percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, the percentage with statements of special educational needs is broadly average. The college provides a wide range of extended services for the local community and the governing body manages out-of-school and nursery provision. The college has achieved the Healthy Schools award and the International Schools award and in September 2010, it gained specialist technology college status.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Thomas Estley Community College is a forward-looking, innovative, aspirational and ambitious college. Its excellent and inspiring senior leaders ensure the highest quality of educational provision, which in turn results in exceptional achievement and outcomes for students.

There has been a relentless focus on improvement and the achievement of excellence across all aspects of college life. Challenging, aspirational but realisable targets are set, regularly met and often exceeded. The detailed attention to individual groups has resulted in the continual raising of attainment and improvement in the progress students make in their learning. The innovative, creative and unique curriculum is a major strength of provision that engages and motivates students. But equally, the exceptional quality of care, guidance and support students receive, the rigorous and thorough monitoring of their progress, the sharply focused interventions and the excellent quality of teaching, all play a major role.

While assessment to support learning is good overall, it is not yet outstanding because it is not having a consistently strong impact on learning. The quality of questioning in all lessons is not yet always sufficiently open and probing to further and deepen learning as well as to confirm learning. The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and includes a number of outstanding features but the quality of monitoring and tracking of children's progress is not yet as good as the excellent practice seen in college; as a result it is unable to inform provision and improve outcomes as well as it might.

Despite the college being judged outstanding, it is not complacent and the pursuit of excellence underwrites all college activities. College leaders engage in high quality and critical self-evaluation and their identification of key strengths and weaknesses is accurate. The energy and dedication with which leaders define and implement actions to build on strengths and to overcome weaknesses, together with the impact of such actions, are exceptional. As a result, since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in all major areas. An outstanding feature of the college is the extent to which it benchmarks its performance against the best - where it falls short of the best it takes energetic steps to improve, but where it is the best, it is proactive in sharing this with others in order to promote best practice more widely.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine monitoring and tracking processes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they are as good as those used in college and can be used strategically to improve provision and outcomes.

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- In order to maintain the outstanding quality of learning and progress of students in Key Stage 3, ensure that:
 - appropriate assessment for learning techniques are firmly and consistently embedded in all lessons and their impact on learning is as strong as in the best lessons
 - teachers are routinely able to use open and probing questioning to not only check learning but also to further and deepen learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Attainment in core and foundation subjects significantly exceeds national averages. Attainment in mathematics is exceptionally high and in technology subjects it shows significant improvements at all levels. There is a consistently improving trend in attainment indicators for all individual groups of students, including those with special educational needs.

The number of students making two National Curriculum levels of progress is consistently and significantly above expected levels and the value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 puts the college among the top performing schools nationally. The college is highly successful in closing the gap between the rates at which different groups of students make progress in their learning. Students with statements of special educational needs regularly outperform their challenging individualised targets and make excellent progress in their learning. Evidence from lesson observations during the inspection confirmed these findings, and indicated that learning was at least good in the very large majority of lessons and outstanding in over a quarter of lessons.

Judgements about other pupil outcomes contribute significantly to their exceptional achievement.

Students feel safe, secure, supported and valued.

Excellent behaviour ensures that students remain on task and are eager to achieve. Permanent exclusions are rare and fixed-term exclusion rates are low.

Students understand how to lead healthy lives. The take-up of school meals is well above the national average and many students engage in extra-curricular sporting activities.

All students spoke enthusiastically about the wide range of opportunities they have to contribute to their school and the wider community. They are surprisingly well informed about community cohesion, how they can contribute and what the impact of their actions is on its success.

High attendance means that students are able to improve the progress they make in their learning. Students exhibit, well-developed personal, social, communication and thinking skills and enterprise and financial capability.

Students exemplify one of the college's core values - a community built on mutual respect.

A typical comment from parents and carers included, '(The college) is very good at

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encouraging my child to be independent and face new social and other challenges with confidence.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The outstanding quality of teaching and good assessment contributes significantly to the outstanding quality of students' achievement and other outcomes. Key features include:

- good use of learning objectives to frame well-planned learning activities
- very effective use made of well-briefed external speakers
- strong and purposeful relationships between students, teachers and other adults
- the variety of interactive teaching and learning activities that encourage an exceptional level of student engagement, interest and enthusiasm and a clear enjoyment of learning
- the variety of individual, paired and group work that provides excellent opportunities to develop independent learning and collaborative and communication skills
- teaching assistants who are active and sensitive to the needs of the individual

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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students they support

- students have a confident knowledge of their targets and how to improve their work
- excellent practice in marking was noted in some subjects, particularly English, although such quality is not as high in all subjects
- while teachers make use of a wide range of assessment for learning activities, the impact on learning is not consistently as strong as it might be
- although teachers make effective use of questioning to check learning, open and probing questioning that deepens and furthers learning is not used regularly enough.

The imaginative, creative and highly innovative curriculum instils in students a real enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, learning. There is clever and creative interweaving of personal, learning and thinking skills and cross-curricular themes as well as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the curriculum. The Year 9 curriculum is personalised to ensure students are very well prepared for their transition to upper school and Key Stage 4, including a clear focus on appropriate vocational courses and learning contexts. The recently achieved specialist technology college status is already strengthening the work of the college through the purchase of ICT hardware; even firmer links and liaison with upper schools over curriculum planning and well-constructed plans for partnership working between subject areas. Enrichment courses and the wide variety of well-attended extra-curricular activities strengthen this outstanding curriculum still further.

Thomas Estley is a warm, welcoming college with a real family feel to it. In the words of one parent, '(Our child) is only one child in a large school and yet we have been made to feel that he is the only one.' In a college with only one key stage, transition arrangements, both from primary school and to upper school, are of vital importance in ensuring that students feel confident, are ready to learn and achieve well. Thomas Estley does this exceptionally well: many parents and carers commented on how seamless the transition from primary school had been and Year 9 pupils are given outstanding information, advice and guidance in making their Year 10 curriculum choices and other career options.

There is outstanding support for vulnerable students, with each student having a personalised package of support. Many additional support systems and partnerships with external agencies ensure that all students with pastoral or academic difficulties are given the help they need. Exceptional support is available to encourage and support parental involvement in their children's education. One parent commented, 'The Working Together idea (where the college works with the parents and carers of students who are underachieving) is fantastic. I feel very involved in my child's education and future.' Strategies to promote regular attendance are very strong and extremely successful. The school has an exceptional focus on inclusion: the highly successful integration of a large group of students from the local special school and the progress they are making are testimony to this. The college values and promotes life-long learning. Its central role in the community and as a provider of many extended services for senior citizens, family

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learning, the nursery and an out-of-school club confirms this.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

By focusing on excellence, the Principal and his senior leadership team have created an ethos of high aspirations and expectations, and a college that is open to new ideas and prepared to take risks in order to improve. There is exceptionally high morale among staff in the college, all of who are totally committed to the core values of excellence, fairness and raising achievement. Staff who returned Ofsted's staff questionnaire were overwhelming positive in their responses, typical comments included, 'Great school - proud to be part of it' and '...everyone puts the pupils first.' Professional development opportunities for staff emerge out of the priorities identified in the college's improvement plan and involve extensive sharing of best practice both within the college and with other schools and colleges. Middle leaders of subject areas and pastoral aspects have been given autonomy and responsibility. As a result, they are proactive, fully accountable and have an absolute focus on improving outcomes for students, while being supportive of their teams and being well-supported by senior leaders.

College leaders are relentless in their drive to overcome any underachievement. Monitoring and tracking systems indicate a tenacious and resolute approach that is exceptionally thorough so that any underperformance, whether in the quality of teaching, assemblies and tutor periods or in the progress students make in their learning, is promptly identified and appropriately targeted, with ample evidence of very successful impact.

The very positive relationships with parents and carers promote strong partnerships between home and college, enabling students to learn more effectively. The college is involved in a wealth of successful partnerships with other schools, colleges, external agencies and commercial organisations that enhance the curriculum and care, guidance and support and thus contribute to students' enjoyment and their achievement. The college makes an exceptional contribution to promoting community cohesion within the school and in the local community, and this contribution extends to the wider regional, national and international communities of which it is a part.

The effectiveness of the governing body is outstanding. It is impressively well-informed about the college's strengths and weaknesses, and makes a really valued contribution to strategic decision-making. It is fully involved in the life of the college and considers

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regular 'connecting and communicating' with parents and carers as a priority. The promotion of equal opportunity is at the heart of what the college does. Monitoring and evaluation are sophisticated and extend beyond mere academic achievement to ensure that all students have an equal chance to take part in a range of enrichment opportunities and experiences. All aspects of safeguarding are securely in place, with systems that go well beyond the minimum statutory requirements and demonstrate practice of the highest quality. Resources are very well managed and the college provides excellent value for money, making best use of school staff and other resources.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

When they enter the nursery, children's skills and experiences are broadly similar to those expected for their age. They make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Children initiate activities and make decisions, listen to adults, are keen to follow instructions, behave well, are confident, concentrate well and are happy to play alongside other children and share resources. They become increasingly independent, are generally sensible in the nursery and outside and very much enjoy responsibility.

Good attention is paid to meeting each child's individual needs. Activities are well planned, wide ranging and interesting. The 'learning journey' portfolios of each child's progress are outstanding records of learning and progress. The quality of the learning environment is good, but it is hampered by the need to pack away most items at the end of the day because the room is used for other purposes. The nursery makes outstanding use of college facilities and the adjoining primary school grounds. A new outdoor learning area has recently been installed that enhances the nursery provision

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but, as yet, children do not have free flow access to it. While relationships, support, care and guidance for children in the out-of-school club are good, provision is satisfactory because planning for their needs is not yet well-enough defined.

The new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has made significant changes since taking up the post eight months ago. Robust self-evaluation indicates that leaders have a realistic view of the provision's strengths and the developments that are needed. All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and there is a strong focus on improving the nursery and out-of-school club. There is a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff, which is contributing to improved provision. Provision complies with all registration requirements, promotes equality of opportunity well and supports children's safety and welfare to an outstanding level. The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding and feedback from parents and others confirms that they are very pleased with the provision and their children's welfare and learning. Although, children's attainment is recorded termly, systems to monitor and track small steps in progress throughout children's time in the nursery are not sufficiently refined to allow a more strategic analysis that would contribute to improving provision and thus outcomes further.

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

Almost a half of all parents and carers returned Ofsted's questionnaire - an exceptional response rate. Responses fully supported the judgements that inspectors made about the college. For example, 99% of responses indicated that parents and carers felt the college keeps their child safe and meets their children's particular needs. Very few responses were critical although a number regretted that their children had to leave the college at 14. For example, one parent noted, 'The only complaint I have with the school is that it doesn't take pupils up to 16 years' and another said of their son who is in Year 9, 'If we had any regrets it would be that he could not stay at Thomas Estley longer!'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas Estley 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 310 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 706 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	149	48	151	49	8	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	155	50	153	49	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	100	32	192	62	13	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	109	35	187	60	10	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	135	44	171	55	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	91	29	193	62	18	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	25	211	68	20	6	0	0
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)	118	38	177	57	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	113	36	193	62	3	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	123	40	165	53	8	3	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	79	25	191	62	4	1	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	143	46	165	53	1	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	162	52	146	47	2	1	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



15 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Thomas Estley Community College, Broughton Astley, Leicester, LE9 6PT
Inspectors thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Thomas Estley Community College, particularly the time we spent in your lessons and in our meetings with you. We judged your college to be outstanding. You should feel proud to be a part of such a forward-looking, innovative and ambitious college, which provides you with an education of the highest quality.

The detailed attention given to the progress that each of you makes means that your achievement is excellent, as is your behaviour and your attitudes to learning. As so many of you commented, the curriculum at your college is exceptional, innovative and exciting. But just as important, you receive excellent teaching and care, guidance and support.

The leadership of your college, including your subject departments and pastoral care, is excellent and all staff strive to ensure that you receive the best education possible and make as much progress in your learning as you possible can.

Even an outstanding college can continue to improve further. We have asked the Principal and staff to work on making the following areas even better:

- using different types of assessment activities that enable you to make even more progress in your learning
- making greater use of open and probing questions to make you think more deeply
- refining systems in the nursery to track children's progress in greater detail.

All of you can help the college to work on the first two of these areas by continuing to demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector

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