



# Portslade Community College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114599  
**LEA** Brighton and Hove  
**Inspection number** 279422  
**Inspection dates** 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Martyn Rhowbotham HMIHMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Chalky Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Portslade
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Brighton, East Sussex BN41 2WS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 416300
<b>Number on roll</b>	1017	<b>Fax number</b>	01273 422129
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr David King
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mike Tait

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11 to 19	16 November 2005 - 17 November 2005	279422

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Portslade Community College is an average-sized mixed comprehensive community college. It has a nursery and a playgroup and also provides adult education classes. The college's sports facilities and library are open to the public and the college also runs the youth service on behalf of the local authority. The sixth form centre is situated about a mile away from the main site. Parts of the college are open 360 days a year and some services are available to the community from early morning until late in the evening. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is at the national average. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is below the national average. The percentage of students with special educational needs is below the national average and the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average. Attendance is at the national average. The college has grown significantly over recent years. Staff recruitment to mathematics and technology has been difficult in recent years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. This concurs with the college's own evaluation. The college is aware of its main strengths and what needs to be improved further to ensure all students reach their full potential. The college provides a valuable resource for the local community and has developed many productive partnerships with a wide range of external agencies. Students' personal development and their care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There is a wide range of courses on offer in the main college and in the sixth form. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall but many lessons do not have clear objectives and there is too much inconsistency in the quality of lessons. Students are often unclear about what they need to do to improve. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the college is satisfactory. In some lessons, a minority of students have unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. Students benefit from the wide range of sporting and other additional activities on offer. Students generally enjoy their education. The school council is very effective and is valued by students and staff.

Students start at the college with standards at the national average. By the end of Year 9, students reach average standards in English and science but below average standards in mathematics. The percentage of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C has increased in recent years and is now close to the national average.

Parents are generally positive about the college, although a minority have some concerns about bullying and behaviour. The college has successfully addressed some, but not all, of the weaknesses found at the last inspection. Governors are committed to the success of the college. The new college management team has begun to introduce some important changes, demonstrating good capacity to improve.

**Grade: 3**

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

Inspectors judge that the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory, although the college believes it is good. A broad range of suitable courses is offered to students that often builds on work undertaken in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory, leading to students making satisfactory progress. Students are set challenging targets and progress is carefully monitored, although they are not always clear about how to improve their grades. Students receive good support and guidance and teachers know their students well. Attendance has improved and is now good due to newly introduced systems of monitoring. The sixth form has good plans for development, although these have not yet had time to fully impact on raising achievement.

**Grade: 3**

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- improve the consistency of teaching so as to engage and motivate all students
- improve students' progress in lessons by the setting of realistic and clear learning objectives
- enable students to understand more clearly what they need to do to improve
- improve students' attitudes to learning by providing more interesting and stimulating activities in some lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

Inspectors agree with the college that standards and achievement are satisfactory. When students start in Year 7, their standards are at the national average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9, students reach average standards in English and science but below average standards in mathematics. The percentage of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades has increased in recent years and is now close to the national average. Standards in English and mathematics in Year 11 are also rising and are now just below the national average. The college sets itself challenging targets for the end of Year 9 and Year 11 but despite improvements in standards has not been able to achieve these.

The progress made by students between Year 7 and Year 11 is satisfactory, although girls make better progress than boys. The progress of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is also satisfactory.

The standards achieved in post-16 examinations are below the national average, although student progress is satisfactory. There was an improvement in results in 2005, although there are inconsistencies between different departments. The achievement of students in both academic and vocational courses is similar.

**Grade: 3**

## **Personal development and well-being**

Students generally enjoy school. Some take additional responsibilities, such as Year 10 students supporting students in Year 7 through a mentoring scheme. Students also make a good contribution to the community, for example, through becoming youth volunteers for summer activities and their contribution to the Tsunami appeal. Students generally feel secure in school. They are provided with good opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle, for example, through additional sports activities and the healthy meals available at lunchtime. The lively and active school council influences school life well and the council's work is valued by staff and students. Opportunities to develop skills that contribute to their future economic

well-being are satisfactory.

Where teaching is better, students enjoy what they are doing and behave well. Whilst there are few instances of very poor behaviour, in the less effective lessons students' interest and motivation decline, as does their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Students' self-confidence and their relationships, appreciation of right from wrong and understanding of their own and other cultures are satisfactory. However, there are too few formal opportunities for them to improve these aspects of their development further.

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and the school has succeeded in reducing the amount of unauthorised absence.

**Grade: 3**

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

The college assesses the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory overall and this is confirmed by the inspection. Whilst there is very little unsatisfactory teaching, the college is working to disseminate good practice so as to increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching. In the better lessons, students are clear about their objectives and what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers plan relevant and interesting tasks that students enjoy doing. Students take responsibility for their own learning and progress. They work hard and behave well. In an effective information technology lesson, students were clear about what they needed to achieve by the end of the lesson. They worked independently throughout the lesson and they all achieved their objectives. In the less effective lessons, objectives are often very vague, with the result that students are unsure of what they are going to learn and how they are going to make progress. It is also difficult to measure whether effective learning and progress has been made during the lesson. In these lessons a narrow range of teaching methods is employed and students are not challenged or engaged sufficiently resulting in a deterioration of attitudes and behaviour. Assessment is satisfactory. Most students are aware of their target grades but are unsure of what they need to do to improve.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students enjoy their lessons and they are keen to do well. Learning objectives are often too vague, making it difficult to measure students' progress.

**Grade: 3**

### **Curriculum and other activities**

Inspectors agree with the college's own evaluation that the curriculum and other

activities are good. In Year 10 and Year 11, students can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses. The college has developed productive links with colleges of further education, training providers and employers. There are opportunities for students to take work-related courses and for them to gain work experience in a range of vocational areas. The Village Centre provides a good alternative curriculum for students who are experiencing difficulties in the main school. Students follow a well planned, individual course of study, often involving work experience, with a view to re-integrating them into the main school. There are good links between the main college's curriculum and that on offer in the sixth form. The wide range of courses available in the sixth form enables students to make appropriate choices based on their previous achievement and to take a mix of academic and vocational courses. Students benefit from the good range of sporting and other additional opportunities they have beyond the classroom. Teachers are very committed to this aspect of the college's work. These activities enhance significantly the richness of the school's provision.

**Grade: 2**

### **Care, guidance and support**

Teachers know their students well and the school is a welcoming environment. Year 7 students are helped to settle into the school well.

There are satisfactory procedures to ensure students' safety. Adults treat students with respect. There are good connections with neighbouring schools and other agencies in the community that are used well to benefit students.

The school provides satisfactory advice and guidance to safeguard students and help them in the future through a programme of personal, social and health education and careers advice. The monitoring of students' progress is satisfactory, although not all students know how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve. Links with parents are satisfactory. Parents are generally happy with the college but a significant minority have concerns about behaviour, bullying and the inconsistent approach between departments and year groups to the setting of homework. Policies for dealing with bullying are currently being refined. There is a commitment to equality of opportunity within the college.

**Grade: 3**

### **Leadership and management**

The school evaluates its leadership and management as good. Inspectors judge them to be satisfactory with some strengths and good capacity for improvement. The principal provides strong leadership and has continued to raise the profile of the college to sustain the trust and confidence of the local community. The college

management team has recently been reorganised into a cohesive group with complementary strengths and clearly identified roles and responsibilities. In the past, leaders and managers have not impacted quickly enough on raising achievement or improving teaching and learning. This new team now has the capacity to drive forward the raising of students' achievements at a faster rate.

Financial management is good and good use has been made of funding opportunities to improve accommodation and to expand provision. Although there have been difficulties appointing staff in the past, especially some middle managers, recent key appointments have been effective. The professional development of staff is targeted clearly at identified needs, such as improving teaching and learning and the development of middle managers.

Systems have been established for the collection of data to monitor students' achievements and to set pupils targets for improvement. Although these recently introduced systems are good, they have not yet had sufficient impact on improving students' progress. Links with the local community, other agencies and other schools are effective. They contribute much to the students' care and guidance and to teachers' professional development.

Governors are well informed and communication between governors' committees and the college management team is good. Governors are very supportive of the college. However, governors should challenge the college further to raise standards.

**Grade: 3**



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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	3	

### The quality of provision

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

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

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
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 are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

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

Portslade Community College Chalky Road Portslade Brighton BN41 2WS

November 2005

Dear Students

As you know, your college was inspected on 16-17 November 2005. Many of you will have seen the inspectors around the college and an inspector may have visited one of your lessons. Some of you came to meetings with inspectors, where we discussed the college with you. Some of your parents or carers filled in confidential questionnaires about the college and we took their views into account when reaching our judgements. You were good at talking about your work and the progress you felt you were making. You all made a contribution to the inspection and we would like to thank you very much for that. We encourage you to read the report. It will let you know in more detail what your college does well, where it could improve and the ways in which you can help your college do this.

The main strengths of the college are:

- the good range of courses on offer in the main college and in the sixth form
- the wide range of extra activities such as sports and trips etc
- the support offered by your teachers
- the school council
- its links with the community.

The school needs to:

- work to make sure that you do well in all subjects in all year groups; you can help in this by attending and behaving well and working hard in all lessons
- set you clear targets in lessons to help you see where you are doing well and where you need more help.

Thank you again for your help in the inspection.

Martyn Rhowbotham HMI Lead Inspector