

Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114311
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357517
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Bell
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Lakey
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2008
School address	Bracken Court Ushaw Moor Durham DH7 7NG
Telephone number	0191 373 0336
Fax number	0191 373 0710
Email address	durhamcbc@durhamlearning.net

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Twenty four lessons taught by 22 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with the chief executive, the principal, staff, groups of students, governors and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's improvement plan, data to show students' attainment and progress and safeguarding procedures. The responses in 35 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 25 completed by staff and 101 from students, were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the recent improvements to attainment and progress are being maintained.
- How improvements to provision have supported the steep rise in attainment and progress since the previous inspection.
- How leaders and managers at all levels have contributed to the school's improvement since the previous inspection, including how well new systems to accelerate improvement are embedding across the school.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. It serves a predominantly White British community. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, while the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. Since the previous inspection, the school has had a higher than average influx of students after the start of the school year. The school has specialist status for Business, Technology and Enterprise. It holds numerous awards, including Investor in Children, Investor in People, the International School Award, Healthy School status and the Impetus Award for Citizenship.

The school has been federated with a nearby secondary school since 2005. The school is the hub for the Durham Federation of schools and makes provision for students from up to seven schools on its vocational courses. There are reciprocal arrangements with several schools in the federation to access courses for Key Stage 4 students. The school has recently been designated a Studio School and an Integrated Services Hub.

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

This is an outstanding school. Excellent teaching, based on an outstanding assessment of students' needs, an innovative and exciting curriculum, and first class care, guidance and support combine to deliver outstanding outcomes for students. Students are enthusiastic learners who work hard; their behaviour is exemplary. Inclusion is the watchword in this highly cohesive community where the extent to which students feel safe is outstanding. This is because they are known as individuals, and support and guidance to meet their wide-ranging needs are tailored to individual students. The impact of this outstanding inclusion practice is evident in the remarkable rise in attendance to significantly above average, and in the striking improvement to students' performance in GCSE examinations from below to above the national average.

Students' achievement is outstanding. All students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress from their different starting points. Attainment has risen markedly since the previous inspection. While the percentage of students reaching the higher levels has increased, the school is aware that there is room for even more improvement. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Students understand and accept the diversity of society. The school's excellent outreach to the local community and well beyond, including the students' excellent contribution to this, leads to an outstanding promotion of community cohesion. Students show an excellent regard for healthy lifestyles and are keen to keep fit and eat a sensible diet. When they leave the school, students are exceptionally well equipped for the future with good basic skills and excellent personal qualities. They are confident, mature young people, who fully understand their role in shaping and supporting the society in which they find themselves.

The inspirational and astute leadership of the chief executive, ably supported by a dedicated senior leadership team has transformed the school's performance in all areas since the previous inspection. The vivid ambition for excellence, evident in all aspects of the school's work, is excellently supported by highly-skilled and dedicated staff. School self-evaluation is well delegated, robust and rigorous. It is precise and accurate in its identification of areas for improvement. Since the previous inspection, the school's effectiveness has moved from satisfactory to outstanding because attainment has risen to above average and all aspects of provision have improved to outstanding. The school therefore has an excellent capacity for further improvement. Governance is outstanding, because members of the governing body give excellent support and challenge to the school, and are fervent about making it the best it can be. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are exemplary in keeping students safe, secure and able to learn to the best of their ability. Excellent links with parents and external providers further enhance and support students' outstanding achievements.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of students achieving the higher grades by fully implementing the new systems for identifying and supporting these students in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students have excellent attitudes to learning and their attendance is high. They work hard and show great determination to succeed. Their learning is rapid and secure especially when they are expected to think for themselves and learn through well-designed tasks that challenge and motivate them. Students relish opportunities to work together. For example, in a Year 11 literature lesson students were struck by how much they were learning from each other when comparing two poems. Students' excellent behaviour and respect for others make an outstanding contribution to their learning. Students say they feel very safe at school and are very well aware of how to reduce risk to themselves. Students have an excellent understanding of healthy living: they enjoy plenty of exercise and a high proportion walk or cycle to school. Members of the student nutrition action group, for example, are ambassadors for healthy eating and work hard to promote this within school. Students welcome responsibility. One in ten students are members of the school council, which is a powerful force for school improvement. The contribution made by students to their own and the wider community is outstanding because they have an exceptionally well-developed sense of their right to influence decisions and their responsibilities as tolerant, caring citizens. Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in students' willingness to grasp new ideas, value difference and challenge racism. When they leave, students are exceptionally well prepared for their future economic well-being with an extensive range of skills; they are ambitious and know how to work hard to succeed.

Students' attainment is above average, and their achievement is outstanding because they make excellent progress from below average and sometimes low starting points. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same excellent progress as their peers because their learning is extremely well monitored and they are continuously supported to overcome barriers to their learning. The rise in students' attainment since the previous inspection has been rapid. School tracking data and inspection evidence indicate that students are on course to exceed the high performance of last year. Nonetheless, the school rightly recognises the need to continue to raise the percentage of students reaching the higher grades so that all students achieve the very best they can.

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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	2
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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have detailed knowledge of students' learning and use this exceptionally well to plan lessons that challenge, motivate and deliver success. High-quality teaching is based on excellent subject knowledge and a shared ambition amongst staff for students to achieve their very best. The high level of consistency in planning and lesson structure is a key factor in students' successful learning. In all lessons students are clear about their learning targets and how they can achieve them, and know that teachers are on hand to give prompt support and direction should they need it. Students rise willingly to teachers' very high expectations of effort and pride in their work so that lessons proceed at a brisk pace and time is very well used. Excellent resources and well-planned use of new technologies provide just the support to enable students to work independently at their own rate. Teachers make very good use of questioning in lessons to develop students' thinking and to check on their understanding of new ideas. Marking and dialogue between staff and students is excellent in promoting the continuous improvement of students' work and is a key factor in the rise in attainment seen since the previous inspection. Students are trained to evaluate their own and others' learning so that they are continually focused on improvement and are happy to learn from each other. Careful planning for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that work is pitched at the correct level to enable them to work independently. These students are able to develop confidence as learners and to enjoy the same feelings of success as their peers. This has

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been a significant factor in the transformation of their achievement since the previous inspection.

The highly-innovative curriculum is very well matched to the needs of all students. The rapid development of vocational courses, including work-based learning, ensures that students of all abilities have pathways to success. The provision of a wide range of attractive courses has been fundamental in engaging students who were potentially reluctant learners. The gap in achievement between groups of learners has been radically reduced, attendance has soared and persistent absence is rare.

Excellent links with local schools extend the range of subjects available to students as well as attracting many students from other centres. The school's specialism makes a significant contribution to developing innovative approaches to learning and raising standards, for example, through after school programmes and the highly-successful Young Apprenticeship programme. The curriculum is particularly well adapted to meet the needs of students, as in Year 7, where they are taught by a small group of staff so that their learning is closely monitored and managed. Enrichment and extended learning opportunities abound and provide students with new interests and opportunities to develop their talents. Students are very appreciative of these; uptake and involvement is high.

The unflinching commitment of staff to support students to do the very best they can is the foundation of success for all groups of students. The high quality of care is greatly appreciated by students, and their parents and carers, who have absolute trust in the staff. Rigorous and regular monitoring of students' academic progress and well-being keep staff alert to any changes in students' needs. There are highly-effective systems to monitor the performance and well-being of students whose circumstances put them at risk of being vulnerable. This allows the school to respond rapidly and take prompt action to give additional support. Pastoral staff make excellent links with external services to provide the best and most appropriate support for individuals and their families. Supervision in the school is excellent: students report that this makes them feel safe and secure anywhere in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

The senior leadership team has redefined the role of middle leaders and their accountability for improvement. This has accelerated developments across all areas of the school's work. Middle leaders' monitoring of provision and student progress is regular, rigorous and far reaching in its scope. Monitoring and evaluation are incisive and accurate:

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they pinpoint precisely where improvement is needed to realise the school's ambitious aims. The chief executive has been inspirational in leading change and innovation. The school is a leader of exemplary practice in its curriculum, use of federation status to make provision for students in a large number of other schools and in its development of extended services for the community. The chief executive has been exceptionally well supported by able senior leaders, both teaching and non-teaching, to turn her ambitious vision into reality. They, together with staff, students, governors and parents fully support her vision for the school. Morale is very high, all feel empowered to succeed and excellent teamwork sees professional expertise willingly shared to benefit everyone in the school.

The governing body give excellent support and direction to the work of the school. They use rigorous systems to evaluate the school's work and hold it to account over attainment and the implementation of its policies. They are highly responsive to changing needs and are innovative and forward looking in their strategic development of the school. They have ensured that safeguarding on this complex site is outstanding, and that work with key agencies to protect students is exemplary. The promotion of equal opportunities is excellent. It ensures that there is no discrimination by giving all students access to a curriculum that matches their needs and aspirations and prepares them very well for the future.

Excellent links with parents and carers keep them well informed about and involved in their children's learning. The school and the local community are highly cohesive because the school is aware of and responsive to the community's needs. It is also highly successful in developing students' understanding of differences in society and their acceptance and tolerance of these. Partnerships with other schools, including its federation partner, are outstanding, because the school promotes the sharing of expertise for the benefit of all students in the locality.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. All agree that the school takes very good care of their children, that their children enjoy school and that they are helped to support their children's learning. Many parents commented on how well their children were progressing at the school and, in their words, 'Are very happy with their progress and support they receive.' Others commented on the approachability of staff and how well their children had settled since joining the school. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities appreciate, 'the kindness and understanding shown' and are pleased that their children, 'Now love going to school and don't shy from new situations.' The inspection found much to support these positive views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 420 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	57	15	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	60	14	40	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	63	12	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	66	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	40	20	57	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	34	21	60	0	0	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)	20	57	14	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	51	17	49	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	54	16	46	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	43	19	54	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	63	13	37	0	0	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



17 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise, Durham, DH7 7NG

Thank you all for the friendly welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We are delighted to tell you how much you contribute to making your school outstanding. Your excellent behaviour, positive attitudes and determination to succeed help you to make excellent progress in all areas of your learning and development so that your attainment is above average. Congratulations to all of you!

You are exceptionally well taught by teachers who are ambitious for you to achieve your best. The curriculum you enjoy is outstanding, not only in its variety and range but also in the way it responds to your changing needs so that any barriers to successful learning are quickly removed. Your enjoyment of learning is a pleasure to see. One example from many was seeing some of you develop your reading skills through enjoying a fantastic range of books, and organising your learning independently and with great confidence. You are extremely well cared for and supported by staff that know you well and have your best interests at heart. Your excellent relationships with staff provide the very strong foundation for your successful learning.

Your chief executive, staff and governors are united in their efforts to improve the school to make it the best it can be and get the very best for you. We have suggested that helping more of you to reach the highest grades would be one way of moving the school forward. You can help by maintaining your excellent attendance and behaviour, and your determination to succeed. Visiting your school was a very special experience for the inspection team because there is such a strong commitment to, and excitement about, learning. The inspection team join me in wishing all of you the very best for year ahead.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector

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