

# Newton Abbot College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113559
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	357380
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Karl Sampson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1123
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	311
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Don Paterson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gareth Davies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Old Exeter Road Newton Abbot Devon TQ12 2NF
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 teachers and 31 lessons, and saw parts of tutor time as well as a house assembly. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors looked at the college's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the college's work, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 148 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers as well as questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students from each year group.

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

- The extent to which teaching provides both support and challenge for all groups of students.
- The contribution to college improvement made by partnerships and the technology specialism.
- The accuracy and demonstrable impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving up outcomes for all groups of learners.
- The quality of provision and leadership and management, and their impact on student outcomes, in the sixth form.

## Information about the school

Newton Abbot College is larger than most comprehensive schools. The college is the main provider of vocational training post-16 within the Greater Newton Abbot Partnership. The majority of the college's post-16 students are following vocational courses. The college has held technology specialist status since 1999 and holds the Investors in Careers and Investors in Work Related and Enterprise Learning Awards. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average; their needs include specific learning difficulties and there are also students with social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is above that found nationally. The college has achieved the International Schools award and holds Healthy School 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?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

Newton Abbot College is good and improving. The college is a welcoming and positive community where students feel safe, enjoy their learning and achieve well. The college has made major strides forward in the three years since its last inspection. Making these improvements has not been easy. It has necessitated a change of approach by staff at all levels but the impact of the college's work to develop a high quality teaching and learning environment is beginning to come to fruition. The Principal's relentless drive for improvement with the support of the governing body and college community has ensured that previous underachievement has been tackled with resolute determination and considerable success. The learning environment has been vastly improved so it no longer acts as a barrier to learning. Consequently, there is a rising trend of attainment and all students make good progress in their learning regardless of their background, starting points or special educational needs. Much has been achieved and everything is securely in place to support the college's further improvement. In particular:

- it is well led by a principal who has a clear commitment to raise the expectations of all students and achieve the highest quality outcomes for them
- effective action has been taken to strengthen leadership and management at departmental level and hold staff more firmly to account
- college development planning and successful interventions to support learning are firmly based on the findings of accurate self-evaluation
- the development of teaching is supported by sharper and more rigorous monitoring by senior staff, with a clear focus on improving classroom practice.

Although some initiatives are still relatively new, others are firmly embedded in practice. Most importantly, the 'improving teaching' programme, with its focus on planning for outstanding learning, is already having a positive impact on student outcomes. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved to be good overall. The most skilful teachers provide challenging learning experiences which engage students as partners in the learning process and encourage them to steer learning by developing ideas of their own or by learning independently. Incisive questioning is used to gauge and deepen students' understanding and their progress is supported by high quality verbal and written subject-specific guidance which clearly conveys the next learning steps. However, these skills are not yet shared by all teachers. Expectations of students' capabilities have been raised through more stringent, and now good, use of assessment data to set challenging targets and devise effective programmes of intervention to address individual underachievement. However, college leaders recognise that the monitoring and evaluation of different groups of students are not yet sufficiently refined to ensure that learning opportunities are equally strong in all curriculum areas.

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The curriculum is good and current improvements in achievement have been strongly supported by a number of carefully considered curriculum changes. Behaviour is good in and around the college; students are polite and courteous to each other and staff, and say that they enjoy their time at the college. This is illustrated by the significant improvement in attendance, which is now high. The college uses its specialist technology status role effectively and works well with a range of partners to improve outcomes for all students. As a result, students make a good contribution to the college and wider community.

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

- Further develop and strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and learning across the college and in the sixth form, by:
  - accelerating the pace of development of the 'improving teaching' initiative to develop teachers' professional skills and teaching strategies so that learning experiences consistently provide high levels of challenge for all students
  - rigorously monitoring and using the assessment information for different student groups to ensure that learning opportunities fully meet the needs of all students across the curriculum. learning experiences consistently provide high levels of challenge for all students rigorously monitoring and using the assessment information for different student groups to ensure that learning opportunities fully meet the needs of all students across the curriculum.
- Strengthen assessment practices in teaching and learning so that students' progress is consistently good or better across all subjects, by:
  - extending the use of high quality dialogue to stimulate more active participation from students in all lessons and increase opportunities for students to explain their ideas fully, deepen their understanding and drive the learning forward
  - enabling students to understand precisely what the subject-specific actions for improvement are, and how to achieve them, so that all students are supported to take greater responsibility for managing and developing their own learning. enabling students to understand precisely what the subject-specific actions for improvement are, and how to achieve them, so that all students are supported to take greater responsibility for managing and developing their own learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

- The quality of learning in classrooms has improved significantly since the last inspection. In the large majority of lessons observed, students made good progress and achieved well. Students are attentive and engage enthusiastically with a wide range of activities. They appreciate active opportunities to extend their thinking and respond well when allowed to steer the learning in lessons.
- GCSE examination results have improved over the last three years and attainment is now average and rising strongly. The standards seen in lessons and students' books and the college's latest analysis of current performance indicate that the progress of

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all groups continues to accelerate. Consequently, current Key Stage 4 students are well placed to meet their challenging targets.

- The college has been effective in the action it has taken to raise achievement in English and mathematics. As a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, changes to the leadership and management structure, and a more focused approach to intervention strategies and teaching groups, the gap in achievement is reducing.
- The rate of students' progress in science has not been as fast due to a high turnover of staff but senior leaders have put in place a comprehensive support programme to accelerate this further.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of the high quality individual and personalised support programmes which are put in place.
- Students demonstrate good engagement with the college and local community. Large numbers volunteer to take on extra responsibility as house and college council representatives as well as to become junior sports leaders, charity fund- raisers and peer mentors.
- Students feel strongly that the college prepares them well for the workplace with the development of good enterprise and personal skills. Last year, the number of students who left the college and who were not in education, employment or training was well below the national average.
- The college has worked hard to improve attendance and has put in place a number of support mechanisms which have proved to be extremely effective, particularly in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

## How effective is the provision?

- The college cares for and supports and guides students well. Good partnerships with parents and carers, a range of outside agencies and neighbouring schools ensure that students' diverse needs are met.
- The college's inclusion centre and a range of personalised learning programmes give good support to all students, especially the most vulnerable. They are valuable aspects which ensure that provision for students with a range of learning needs is flexible and effective.
- The development of the house system, with students from different year groups mixed together in the same tutor group, has made a strong contribution to improvement in this area and students were unanimous in their praise for it.
- The curriculum is developing well and provides an appropriate level of flexibility to meet the needs of individuals. The skills-based curriculum in Year 7 with its emphasis on developing personal, learning and thinking skills and key skills in the specialist subjects is supported effectively by imaginative thematic projects.
- There is a good balance between academic and vocational courses. At Key Stage 4, specialist status and the college's partnership work with other local providers has improved the richness of vocational and applied opportunities available. This has enabled a much greater degree of personalisation for students when selecting

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courses and, as a result, their aspirations, achievement and enjoyment are improving.

- Learning days, enrichment activities and extended learning projects add to students' enjoyment and offer different and challenging ways for them to learn.
- There is a broad range of well-supported extra-curricular activities which give good support to aspects of students' personal development.
- The large majority of lessons observed were good or better. At their best, lessons are inspiring. These lessons use assessment information precisely to plan challenging lesson activities that draw students into learning and enable them to articulate ideas fluently and with confidence. They are underpinned by positive relationships with classes which establish a great platform for learning.
- Less-effective lessons, where progress is no better than satisfactory, typically have the following characteristics:
  - a tendency for teachers to talk for too long, with the result that students are not given enough time to think for themselves or explain their ideas
  - learning activities that do not match the differing needs of all students, which can lead to off-task behaviour and limit progress
  - questioning and dialogue that rarely delves deep in order to check and deepen students' understanding or extend learning further.
  - Inspectors saw effective assessment practice in English, history, art, physical education (PE) and drama where students use subject-specific comments to refine their learning. However, this practice is not consistent across subjects.
  - In too many cases, guidance is of limited value, providing general comments that do not enable the student to respond to and/or reshape their learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

- The Principal and his senior team inspire a strong belief in the college's success, which is shared by all members of the college community. The fulfillment of every student's potential is central to the college's ethos.
- The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is exemplified by its work to successfully raise attainment and achievement overall. Targets are now challenging



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and a more sophisticated tracking system is being used effectively to secure and accelerate students' progress.

- The college is currently developing its analysis of the performance of different groups of students to help leaders and managers identify where to provide additional support and where new teaching strategies need to be developed.
- Good systems are in place to support the continuing professional development of all staff to improve their practice further. The excellent videoed teaching and coaching initiative has proved to be a very powerful lever in supporting the development of teaching and learning across the college.
- The governing body plays a strong supporting role in the college's development. It has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and demonstrates a determined commitment to drive up standards.
- The governing body ensures effective procedures are in place for students' safety, and all current safeguarding requirements are met.
- The college's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Its strengths are in well-established international links and the reinvigorated and shared sense of belonging, involvement and pride within the college community. The recently formed 'change team' has developed a comprehensive development plan but action from this is yet to be fully implemented.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

The college has an inclusive approach to promoting post-16 studies for all students. The majority of sixth form students are undertaking vocational courses through an extensive

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college-based programme and through effective partnership arrangements. Success rates are high and are above national averages.

At GCE A/AS level, progress is improving year on year with most students making the progress expected of them. In some subjects such as GCE A/AS English literature and GCE AS drama, students are making significant progress.

Systems for monitoring student and subject performance have been strengthened, are monitored rigorously and are used to target additional support where needed.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. However, in some cases, the needs of all students are not fully met because the level of debate and discussion is limited. This is hindered further by small class sizes in some instances.

Students feel well cared for and supported. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality is comprehensive and effective. Retention is good. Students are well advised and supported about choices for their future, and progression into higher education and employment is good.

Students enjoy the sixth form and make a positive contribution to the college, for example through working in tutorials with the younger pupils. They have taken the lead in organising events involving the younger pupils and in raising money for local charities.

There has been a relentless and successful focus on improvement by leaders and managers in the sixth form and the capacity for further improvement is good. This is reflected in the consistent improvements in learning and progress.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

A much-lower-than-average percentage of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The very large majority were overwhelmingly positive. A few parents and carers raised concerns about how well the college takes account of their suggestions or concerns as well as the effectiveness with which the college deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the college works hard to support parents and carers, keep them informed and act upon their views. The inspection team judged that behaviour was good in and around the college during this inspection, thanks to the quality of provision and procedures that are in place. The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience and enjoyment at the college and believe that it is led and managed very effectively.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newton Abbot 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 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1123 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	37	78	53	11	7	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	45	30	94	64	5	3	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	62	42	75	51	8	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	37	74	50	10	7	5	3
The teaching is good at this school	45	30	90	61	8	5	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	27	88	59	15	10	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	16	96	65	20	14	3	2
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)	37	25	86	58	8	5	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	31	85	57	10	7	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	28	75	51	16	11	9	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	18	89	60	14	9	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	57	39	76	51	2	1	6	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	44	69	47	11	7	2	1

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

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



4 March 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Newton Abbot College, Newton Abbot TQ12 2NF**

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to tell you about our findings. We judged the college to be good. It has worked hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement. Your Principal leads the college very well, and is ably supported by other staff and the governing body. They are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes. You told us how much you appreciated the work of your teachers.

You enjoy coming to the college, are well cared for, have a good range of curricular opportunities and are well taught. You particularly appreciate the positive benefits of the vertical tutoring system as well as the range of opportunities enabling you to contribute to the college and wider community, and helping you to prepare successfully for life beyond the college. You told us you feel safe, and we found that your behaviour in and around the college is good. You are polite, friendly and make a good contribution to the life of the college and the wider community.

College leaders and staff are committed to continuing its improvement and are all ambitious to make it even better in the future. We have asked your Principal to improve the college in a number of ways:

- ensuring that all lessons meet your needs and provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning
- allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas and take greater responsibility for managing and developing your own learning
- ensuring that teachers consistently give you high-quality feedback on your work so that you always know how to improve in each subject
- closely monitoring and reviewing the progress of different groups of students to ensure that learning opportunities across the curriculum best meet differing needs.

All of you can certainly help your teachers by responding to their comments and using the feedback that they give, to improve your learning and the quality of your work.

Yours sincerely

^ Karl Sampson Her Majesty's Inspector

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