

# Seaham School of Technology

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114286
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	362717
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Cox

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	916
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pauline Ramshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Shield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Burnhall Drive Seaham County Durham SR7 0EN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirty two lessons were observed taught by 32 teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, students, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school including reports on students' attainment and progress, students' work, monitoring reports and the school's self-evaluation. A small number of parents and carers were spoken to and the responses to the school's recent survey of students, parents and carers analysed.

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

- It looked at students' current progress and attainment in English, mathematics and science.
- It looked at the quality of teaching and especially the level of challenge in lessons and the extent to which students learn independently.
- It investigated the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in monitoring the school's work to bring about sustained improvement.
- It investigated the capacity of the school's leaders and managers to sustain the good improvements seen on the third monitoring inspection in November 2010.

## Information about the school

When the school was last inspected in October 2009, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to provide its students with an acceptable standard of education. Subsequently, the school received three monitoring inspections.

Seaham is a slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Almost all the students are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above that seen nationally, yet the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has been a technology college since 2000 and holds various awards, including Sportsmark and Healthy School status.

Since the last full inspection in October 2009, a number of staff have left or retired. New senior appointments to the school have been made, including a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher. New heads of department for English, science and art are in post. The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of two new members with experience in the field of education.

**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?****3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school has improved well since the last inspection and now provides a satisfactory education for its students. The strong determination of the headteacher and his senior and middle leaders has been the main driver for improvement. Leaders and managers possess an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to continue the momentum of strong and secure improvement seen recently. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. There has been a successful focus on improving the quality of teaching and increasing the effectiveness of the systems for tracking students' learning and progress which is now satisfactory. This has been key to raising attainment to average levels. Regular reviews of teaching and learning are undertaken and accurate judgements are made. Where performance is less than is expected, effective support programmes are put in place. Middle leaders and many teachers display a determination to succeed and have risen to the challenges. They have been effective in supporting the improvements by responding well to training and one-to-one coaching delivered by senior staff and external consultants.

Learning is well planned and usually tasks in lessons meet the different needs of the students. As a result, students are increasingly engaged and their behaviour allows learning to progress unimpeded and at a satisfactory rate. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is an increasing proportion which is good. However, the better teaching is not yet having the desired overall impact on students' learning and progress. The school's specialism is providing opportunities for more practical lessons across subject areas. Active learning days, during which all subjects increase the level of practical learning, are a feature of the curriculum. Students acknowledge these improvements and understand the benefits of stronger teaching and the introduction of more practical activities. For example, in a recent evaluation by students of a successful lesson in the White Room (a creative space designed to inspire and engage students), one wrote of enjoying the lesson and that even the teacher seemed 'a lot happier.'

Much has been achieved by a strong team approach between the school and the local authority. The previously intensive external support has now diminished and the school is now able to 'stand alone' and to decide for itself if and when support is needed. Roles and responsibilities have been redefined and have secured effective and sustained improvement across the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and planning is underpinned by solid evidence and accurate data. Recently, the governing body approved its own action plan which, rightly, prioritises a more rigorous system of holding the school to account by being involved more critically in subject department improvements.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

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

- Raise attainment and improve progress further by:
  - - equipping all students with the skills to become independent learners
  - - embedding the use of assessment data in lesson planning to ensure an even sharper focus on meeting individual needs.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
  - - ensuring work in lessons is matched consistently to students' individual needs in all subjects
  - - introducing more cross-curricular themes and more relevant and real-life experiences into the classroom
  - - encouraging the highest levels of engagement and participation by students.
- Increase the rigour with which the governing body holds the school to account by:
  - - further involvement in subject areas across the school
  - - developing further the links with partner schools.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Students are attentive and respond positively to the improved teaching. They speak well of the introduction of more practical lessons that allow them increasing opportunities to work independently and with others. Learning has improved because the tasks set in lessons are increasingly better suited to students' levels of ability. As a result, most students achieve in line with expectations, enjoy lessons and get on well with each other and their teachers. One student spoke proudly of the school having 'good staff who help you out no matter what.'

Students start at the school with attainment that is below average overall. Attainment at the end of Year 11, over the last three years, has been below average in all key subjects and for all groups of students. However, in 2010, a significant improvement was made and students secured results that closely matched those nationally. Learning and progress have also improved, including for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall, progress is satisfactory for all groups of students, with some stronger performance in Years 10 and 11 due to the targeted support for students approaching their examinations. Improving and accurate tracking and assessment data suggest that the trend of improvement is set to continue. Nearly half of the current Year 11 students have secured a grade C or above at GCSE in English and mathematics already and, as a result, the school's challenging targets have been raised further.

Students feel safe and secure in school and tell of an improvement to behaviour because of the higher expectations set. Inspectors observed classroom behaviour that allowed learning to proceed satisfactorily. The proportion of students who have a school meal has doubled over the last year. Students understand the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle and participate regularly in activities both during the school day and afterwards.

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Opportunities exist for students to take on responsibilities, as mentors, school councillors and they are able to make a contribution to shaping some policies, such as changing the school uniform. Opportunities to have an impact on the wider community are developing. Students have developed skills that have prepared them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. They are punctual to school and those spoken to have high aspirations for their future. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and evident in the respect most students show to adults and each other.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

Teaching has improved markedly and is satisfactory overall. However, there is an increasing proportion of good teaching where expectations and challenge are high. The better lessons are characterised by clear routines that provide a good pace to learning. Carefully constructed activities are suited well to students' needs and the progress students make against the learning objectives is monitored and assessed at regular intervals. Students understand the ability groupings in which they find themselves and often work hard to move to another group in which the learning is more challenging. Some subject areas are more successful than others in applying this method of learning and meeting the range of different learning needs. Where the success is evident, the engagement and participation of students are high. The school recognises the need to

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increase the proportion of good lessons and embed the stronger practice and help students to become better skilled at progressing their own learning.

The introduction of cross-curricular themes and real-life experiences helps engage students better in the stronger lessons and provides a more relevant and clearer understanding of the topic being studied. However, this practice is not yet consistent throughout the school. Most teachers use student data well when planning learning. A closer match of work to individual student abilities is emerging and is helping students develop as independent learners but, this is not yet embedded.

The curriculum is satisfactory and generally meets the needs and interests of the students. The technology specialism has provided additional opportunities for some students to experience learning in different contexts and locations, for example, the range of clubs and courses undertaken in partnership with other schools and industry. Leaders and managers have recognised the need to develop the curriculum further.

Students are cared for satisfactorily. Closer relationships with staff have ensured students know who to talk to if they have any issues. Students use the 'CHAT Room' to speak to supportive adults if they have any personal issues they wish to discuss. All students, including those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, are provided with well-established lunchtime clubs and activities that help their learning and development. Guidance for further education, training or employment is appropriate and students speak of being well informed about their future options.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The determination and ambition of senior leaders have got the school 'back on track'. A reshaped leadership team has helped increase the pace of improvement as leaders become more confident and effective in their roles. Teachers are much more accountable for the progress of students in their lessons. There is a systematic approach to securing better quality teaching through effective monitoring and an agreement about the next steps for improvement, which are checked regularly for impact.

The school's effectiveness in promoting equality of opportunity is satisfactory and is evident from an analysis of the school's data and the increasingly accurate identification of the needs of different groups of students. The governing body supports the school well and is increasingly more challenging. Its effectiveness is strengthening as it develops its role in holding the school to account by monitoring the progress of individual departments closely. Safeguarding is good and the training of staff is of high quality and all the

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necessary checks are undertaken. Students speak of feeling safe and appreciate the secure context in which they work. Community cohesion is promoted soundly and the school has plans to develop this aspect of its work. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

*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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires for parents and carers are not normally distributed by Ofsted for special measures monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Inspectors looked at the responses from the school's own questionnaires to parents and carers. Overall, they were very supportive of the school and recognised the improvements that were evident since the school was made subject to special measures. There was nothing in their responses that was in conflict with the inspection findings.



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

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

## 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.**



28 March 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Seaham School of Technology, County Durham, SR7 0EN**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed our time with you and are grateful to those of you who spoke with us. As you will know, in October 2009, your school was judged to require 'special measures.' This meant that inspectors would revisit your school periodically to check on the improvements leaders and managers were making in providing you with a better standard of education. I am very pleased to inform you that your school no longer requires special measures and that we judge it to be providing you with a satisfactory standard of education. You have played your part in this and so well done!

We noticed a big improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. We saw lessons that you found enjoyable and work set that matched more closely your learning needs. We noticed also that the procedures that senior leaders have put in place to ensure that you continue to receive at least a satisfactory education are the right ones and that they are having a positive effect. The school is better than it was. We have asked the school's leaders to continue to make improvements. We want them to:

- help you make better progress and achieve higher standards
- increase the proportion of good teaching so it meets your learning needs
- ensure the governing body becomes increasingly involved in the school and particularly with subject departments.

You can play your part by continuing to do the best you can in lessons and always asking the teachers for more challenging work if you finish it early, and by making the most of every moment in lessons to improve.

Yours sincerely

Peter Cox

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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