

Easington Community Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114318
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357521
Inspection dates	11–12 April 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	772
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Garside
Headteacher	Mrs Toni Spoons
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Thirty three lessons taught by 33 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, groups of students and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's improvement plan, attainment and tracking data, and safeguarding procedures. The responses in 111 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 53 completed by staff and 80 from students, were scrutinised.

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

- If students' progress is consistent at both key stages.
- If attainment in mathematics is rising.
- What accounts for the school's strong trend of improving attainment, suggested by data, by the end of Year 11.
- How well leaders and managers at all levels are contributing to school improvement and how well new systems are embedding.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The vast majority of students are from White British heritages and no students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. A well-above-average percentage of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is in line with that usually seen.

The school is a designated specialist college for science. Since the previous inspection the school has formed a loose federation with neighbouring schools and colleges to extend the curriculum offered to students in Key Stage 4.

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

This is a good school. It is improving rapidly and some aspects of its work are outstanding. Students are motivated to work hard and rise to the high expectations of the headteacher and staff, because they have been convinced that they will succeed. Their good behaviour makes lessons flow smoothly and ensures that time is used well for learning. The extent to which students say they feel safe is outstanding. This is because they are known as individuals to staff, and the outstanding care, guidance and support provided are tailored to meet individual needs. Students whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable are exceptionally well cared for so they are able to learn alongside their peers. The good curriculum contains some excellent features, such as the breadth of subject choice and qualifications available to Key Stage 4 students. The impact of these rapidly developing strengths is evident in the marked rise in students' attainment and accelerating progress at Key Stage 4. The impact is not as strong in Key Stage 3, where recent developments to the curriculum have not had time to embed. The impact of improvements since the previous inspection is also seen in students' improved attendance and a sharp decline in persistent absence.

Students' achievement is good and their attainment is broadly average. Performance in English is better than in mathematics, and the school acknowledges that while attainment in mathematics is improving, there is scope for further improvement in the subject. Performance in the school's specialist subject, science, is well above average. Regular tracking of progress and significant improvements to teaching are contributing well to students' good progress, although assessment information is not consistently well used to offer a high level of challenge to all students. Where it is used well in lessons that are good or outstanding, all students, including the most able, learn at a brisk pace and their delight in their success is evident when teachers praise their efforts.

Leadership and management are good. Middle leaders, including those new to post, are developing their skills well, for example by sharing good practice. They receive good support from senior staff and so are able to make a good contribution to school improvement. School self-evaluation is accurate and the correct priorities are set. The headteacher, well supported by senior colleagues, has shown excellent skill and determination in achieving rapid and secure improvement to all aspects of provision and students' attainment in the midst of a major new build programme. The school's good capacity for further improvement is evident in these improvements and in the way it has transformed students' examination performance since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, especially at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics by:

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- using assessment information more precisely to match work to the full range of students' abilities
- increasing the proportion of good and better teaching, especially in mathematics.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enjoy school as their good attendance testifies. They relish lessons where there is a good level of challenge and when they have a variety of activities from which they can learn. Their learning accelerates when teachers have high expectations of their effort and they work hard to complete tasks. Many students comment on how well they learn when they have opportunities to work together and learn from each other. Good behaviour, determination and self-belief contribute well to students' success. They show a good regard for leading a healthy lifestyle and are keen to take up activities which keep them fit. Students make a good contribution to the community through involvement in charitable fund-raising and the work of the eco-group. They feel they could contribute more to improving the school, especially now that they have transferred to the new building. Inspectors agree that students have the insight and maturity to make a positive contribution to the development of the school. Students' sense of safety and well-being in school is excellent. They say they trust staff to deal promptly and effectively with their concerns. Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their good progress and rapidly improving attainment contribute to preparing them well for their future learning or employment.

Students' achievement is good. From below average starting points when they join Year 7, students make good progress, so their attainment overall is average by the end of Year 11. Progress for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding because they are very well supported by a curriculum that is well tailored to their needs. Attainment has risen markedly since the previous inspection. Performance in mathematics lags behind that of English and the school has taken action to tackle these differences. Strong performance in science, the school's specialism, and in applied art and design, contribute well to students' achievement.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Good teaching is underpinned by teachers' strong subject knowledge which they use effectively to plan activities that motivate students to learn. They encourage students to take a lead in their learning and develop independence. The good range of activities in lessons, together with good use of technology and an emphasis on students learning through collaboration with each other, all contribute to a good pace of learning in most lessons. In the best lessons, the level of challenge is high for all ability groups, because staff make good use of assessment information to stretch and support students to do their best. Targeted questioning develops students' understanding and reveals misconceptions, so that in the best lessons learning is secure and students are able to apply their knowledge well. Teaching is not as effective when available assessment information is not fully used to plan work that meets the needs of all the students. Improving the effectiveness and consistent use of assessment information are current priorities for the school.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 provides an excellent range of subjects and qualifications for students. The school's good links with other schools in the locality contribute well to these developments which have had a marked impact on raising students' achievement. They have generated a steep rise in and high uptake of post-16 education. The curriculum is particularly well adapted for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, though it is not yet as well tailored to challenging the most able students consistently. The

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curriculum at Key Stage 3 is not as well developed, though changes in the current year are beginning to have a positive impact on raising attainment and improving progress. The science specialism makes a significant contribution to the curriculum by offering a wide range of accredited courses across a number of related areas, for example horticulture and fish husbandry. An extensive enrichment programme of after-school clubs and visits, including residential courses, contribute well to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their personal well-being.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The focus on meeting students' needs, particularly those at risk of becoming vulnerable because of their circumstances, is central to the school's aims and is well embedded in practice. Early identification of students' needs is made through good links with partner primary schools and begins well before students transfer from Year 6. All transition arrangements are robust so that students are well prepared for making decisions at each stage as they move through the school. For example, Year 9 students comment that they felt well prepared when they recently made subject choices for Key Stage 4. Students' excellent feelings of safety come from the vigilance of adults in whom they have high levels of trust. Students feel very well known as individuals.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has successfully communicated the ambition of the school with determination and vigour so that it is understood and shared by students, staff and governors. A common sense of purpose and increasing ambition within departments pervade the school. Since the previous inspection, the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders have developed so that staff have a better understanding of their accountability for the performance of students. The school has developed thorough systems for tracking students' progress and monitoring the quality of provision. This has led to well managed sharing of good practice between departments, which has improved the quality of teaching and the curriculum and raised student attainment significantly.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body makes good use of information about the school from the headteacher's and other reports, but does not monitor aspects of the school's work directly, in order to hold it to account. Members of the governing body gave good support to the new school build project. They sought the views of parents, carers and the local community so that these were taken into account. Safeguarding procedures are good and ensure that students and staff are safe and secure on site. The promotion of community cohesion is good. Students learn about difference and diversity through the

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well-planned curriculum. They contribute well to their local community through arts and music programmes and a range of international school links add to students understanding of and contribution to other communities. The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well; racist incidents are few and dealt with swiftly.

Links with parents and carers are promoted well, for example through the home/school liaison officers, who are especially effective where students are experiencing difficulties. A wide range of partnerships with local schools and colleges and external services extend curriculum opportunities and provide access to specialist help should students need this.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

A relatively low proportion of parents and carers returned inspection questionnaires. The vast majority agree that the school keeps their children safe, that teaching is good, that the school is effectively led and managed and that their children are well prepared for the future.

A small minority of parents raised concerns about the information they receive about their children's progress and support to help their learning, the extent to which the school responds to their suggestions and concerns and how well the school promotes a healthy lifestyle for students. Several parents were concerned that they do not meet with their children's subject teachers during parent consultation meetings.

Inspection evidence supports parents and carers' positive views of the school, and these are commented on in the report. Inspection evidence also shows that students have good opportunities and encouragement to develop a healthy lifestyle. It also found that the school has limited contact with parents via subject teachers for information and advice on

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how to support their children's learning. However, the school has plans in hand to review existing consultation procedures to improve support for parents to help with their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Easington Community Science 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 772 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	20	77	69	9	8	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	31	28	73	66	3	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	32	64	58	7	6	4	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	27	67	60	10	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	19	17	79	71	7	6	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	17	74	67	13	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	15	75	68	15	14	1	1
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)	27	24	74	67	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	24	72	65	8	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	26	67	60	9	8	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	14	71	64	15	14	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	28	25	75	68	0	0	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	31	65	59	6	5	3	3

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.



13 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Easington Community Science College, Peterlee, SR8 3AY

Thank you all for the friendly, polite welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Your school provides a good quality education which is helping you to achieve well in your learning and personal development, and giving you a good foundation for future success. Your school's good improvement is partly due to your positive attitudes and determination to succeed. You make good progress in your learning; your attainment is average and in some subjects such as science and art and design, it is above average. A number of you do not do as well as you could in mathematics and we have asked the school to make improvements to help you do better in the subject. We have also suggested that teachers make better use of assessment information to set students in Key Stage 3 more challenging work.

You are taught well and enjoy a good curriculum. In Key Stage 4, you have an excellent choice of subjects which ensures that you are successful in GCSE examinations. You assured us that you feel extremely safe in school and that you trust adults to help you when you have concerns or difficulties. We judge that the care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding. Staff know you very well and are alert to any changes in your behaviour or performance that might need extra support. They respond promptly to your needs and take care to involve your parents whenever this is needed.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are all eager for you to do well. They have shown great determination in finding ways to make sure that each of you has a secure pathway to success. You can play your part in improving the school further by being ambitious for yourselves and working hard – just as you do now. The inspection team wish all at Easington Community Science College a very successful end to the year and very good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector

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