

Woodham Community Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114304
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378838
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	795
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	None
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Robinson
Headteacher	Christine Forsyth
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 33 teachers and 33 lessons, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and analysed 225 questionnaires from parents and carers, 106 from students and 60 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies, including those relating to the safeguarding of students, information the school had collected about the students' progress and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

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

- What the current attainment and progress are in mathematics across the whole school.
- The extent to which students are successfully directed to learn independently and assess for themselves how well they are doing.
- How effective the school's monitoring and evaluation are, especially those of subject leaders, in accelerating improvement in areas that are less strong.

Information about the school

Woodham is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. It is designated 11 to 18, but there have been no students in the sixth form for the past two years. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most students are White British and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than average. The school is a specialist Technology College. It has a specialist unit for students with physical disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties, but currently there are no students in the unit. The school has many awards, including Healthy School status and the International Award for the development of students' understanding of other cultures. The headteacher has been in post since September 2010, but was previously the acting headteacher for one year.

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

Woodham Community Technology is a good school that is improving strongly. Outcomes for students are good because their achievement and all aspects of their personal development are good. Students, staff, parents and carers are most positive about the school. The following comments from parents and carers exemplify the views of many, 'The staff show a genuine care and concern.' and 'I have nothing but praise in the highest degree for this school.'

The headteacher and her newly-formed leadership team have been instrumental in bringing about the improved success of the school. Since the previous inspection many aspects of student outcomes have improved, including their behaviour, attendance and their learning and progress. Students enter in Year 7 with attainment that is slightly below average. They leave in Year 11 with attainment that is securely in line with that found nationally overall, but above average on many indicators. For example, in 2011 the percentage of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE rose by 12% from the previous year, to 80%. Progress in both key stages is good and progress in mathematics, an area in which students were underachieving, is now good, due to rigorous monitoring and evaluation and increased accountability of teachers and subject leaders.

The quality of teaching has also improved and is good. There is some outstanding practice in teaching and learning within the school, although this is not shared well enough at present. In some lessons students are directed well to be able to say how successfully they are learning and how they can improve their work, but this is not a consistent feature of all lessons. Senior staff and subject leaders carry out many lesson observations and this has helped to raise the quality of teaching. However, these observations do not always have a close enough focus on the learning that is taking place. As a result attainment is not as high as it might be at present, nor the acceleration of learning and progress as fast.

Students are welcoming and proud of their school. The school lives up to its motto, 'Achievement for All', with equality of opportunity judged as good. The school's technology specialism impacts well throughout the school. Specialist targets are met and science is a leading department in using assessment information as a tool to improve learning. The good curriculum caters for the needs of individual students well with its wide range of courses and enrichment activities. Students welcome the many opportunities that the school has to offer, such as American Football and

Young Leaders promoting sport for younger children in primary schools. They recognise that there have been many improvements in their academic education. One student told the inspectors, 'The teaching has improved, so you really want to come to school now.'

The school's very accurate self-evaluation and its drive to be even better, coupled with the significant improvements that have been made recently, indicate that the capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further and accelerate the rate of progress by:
 - sharing more effectively the outstanding practice in teaching and learning that already exists within the school
 - in lessons, always providing clear guidance so that all students can understand how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve their work
 - ensuring senior staff and subject leaders observe lessons with a closer focus on the learning that is taking place.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspection evidence from lesson observations confirms that learning and progress are good overall, and sometimes outstanding. Expectations are high and students enjoy a challenge. Their behaviour contributes well to their learning. These features were exemplified well in many lessons, including a Year 10 science lesson where students worked very effectively in groups debating the arguments for and against making immunisation compulsory. Similarly, in a Year 11 English lesson students were seen supporting each other very well to understand the difference between scripted and spontaneous language. Improved progress was seen in many mathematics lessons, a previous area of underachievement. In an outstanding Year 8 lesson, all students were seen to be highly motivated, enjoying the challenge of grouping numbers in as many different ways as possible. All students, including those who have special educational needs/and or disabilities and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress, because of the well-targeted support and encouragement they receive, including that in the school's learning centre.

Students are in no doubt that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy, recognised in the achievement of Healthy School status. They appreciate the high standard of food provided in school and enjoy the many opportunities to take part in sporting activities and clubs. Students are recognised for their good contribution to the local community, for example, through their involvement in the Youth Town Council and through the Leadership Academy where they help organise sports events at the local leisure centre. There are many opportunities for students to take on responsibility in school and the 'student voice' is strong. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their understanding of international cultures, recognised in the recently gained International Award, is particularly good, because the school's

promotion of community cohesion is good. However, their understanding of minority-ethnic religions and cultures, reflecting those found in the United Kingdom as a whole, are less well developed, but improving strongly. Students leave school well equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to enter post-16 education, employment or training opportunities, with above average attendance, above average attainment in English, information and communication technology (ICT) and average attainment in mathematics. When asked to describe their school, one student replied, 'The people here make this school what it is – friendly relationships, but teachers are strict when necessary.'

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice. However, the outstanding practice is not shared well enough at present. Generally teaching is planned well to meet the needs of all the students and is characterised by a range of interesting and varied activities. ICT is used well to enhance learning and engage students. This was shown to good effect in a Year 7 lesson where students were seen comparing parts of human skeletons with images found on the internet. In many lessons, students are given clear success criteria to enable them to assess how well they are learning. This was exemplified well in a Year 10 art lesson on Batik designs. However, this is not always the case and not all students in all lessons understand clearly enough how well they are doing and how they can improve their work, although the quality of marking is generally good.

The curriculum is personalised well for all its students. In Year 7, the introduction of 'Woodham learning', to help promote learning skills, is helping the students to become more confident in the start to their secondary education. There is a wide range of courses available in Key Stage 4, some of which begin in Year 9 and have early examination entry. In mathematics, 50% of Year 11 students have already gained a grade C in Year 10. Vocational courses and a strong emphasis on preparation for apprenticeships is helping to raise attainment and student interest.

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

The school makes good use of local businesses and training for vocational teachers is strong. All Year 11 students are entered for a stage 2 qualification in ICT. A wide range of activities, such as specialist days, residential visits and out-of-school clubs, contribute significantly to the students' good personal development. Students found it difficult to say which clubs they found most enjoyable, as they feel there are many. However, the Samba club was voted as one of the best. The school is rightly proud of its good care, guidance and support and its reputation as an inclusive school. Students, including the most vulnerable, benefit greatly from a personalised and proactive approach to care, guidance and support. There are many comments from parents and carers complimenting the school on the, 'very successful integration' of their children into Year 7.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is very ambitious for the school and has a clear vision of where the school needs to go and how it will get there. She has built a very strong leadership team with high expectations, where roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and skilfully woven together. Staff morale is very high. Comments, such as, 'The atmosphere in the school is fantastic.' and 'This school is on a relentless upward trajectory.' indicate the satisfaction and level of commitment of the staff. It is, therefore, no surprise that the school has made great strides towards its goals. Challenging targets are being used increasingly effectively to raise attainment. For example, the school's analysis showed that all groups of students made significantly better progress in 2010/2011 than they did in 2009/2010. In addition, gaps in performance of different groups are rapidly closing, indicating that equality of opportunity is good. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching. However, the school acknowledges that at present lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on learning. Members of the governing body are fully involved in the work of the school and know its strengths and what it needs to do to improve. They help shape the direction of the school, but are not currently fully involved in evaluating their own effectiveness.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value greatly the openness and approachability of the staff. Their views are sought regularly and acted upon and they are kept well informed of their children's achievement, well-being and development through 'Rising Stars Reviews' several times a year. Safeguarding procedures are good, with clear policies and secure risk-assessment systems. Health and safety and child protection arrangements are very thorough. All members of staff have regular training in these matters and are well informed. The promotion of community cohesion within school, locally and internationally is particularly good, but links with other schools nationally of a different socio-economic or cultural makeup have not yet been fully established. There is a wide range of

good partnership involvement, including close links with a number of other local schools and post-16 provisions. This helps to ensure a smooth transition into the next stage in the students’ education. The school achieves good value for money.

These are the grades for the 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	2
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

Just over 30% of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. They were very positive about all aspects of the school’s work, particularly the extent to which their child enjoys school, the way the school informs them of their child’s progress and that their child is making enough progress. The inspection team judged that the students’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their education are good. A few parents and carers did not agree that the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour effectively. Inspectors followed up this concern but found behaviour to be good overall and students reported that any misbehaviour was dealt with increasingly appropriately. A small minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not help them to support their child’s learning. The inspectors felt that this was something that the school was doing well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodham Community Technology 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 225 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 795 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	30	144	64	9	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	33	135	60	8	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	71	32	138	61	9	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	31	141	63	5	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	65	29	145	64	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	55	24	137	61	22	10	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	23	154	68	16	7	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)	65	29	138	61	6	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	24	155	69	7	3	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	24	134	60	24	11	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	25	127	56	16	7	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	60	27	139	62	12	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	34	136	60	4	2	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



21 September 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Woodham Community Technology College, Newton Aycliffe,
DL5 4AX**

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you in your lessons very much. We judged your school to be good and one that is improving strongly. We would like to share with you why we think this is so and what the school can do to make certain aspects even better.

Your achievement is good; you learn and progress well and the standards you attain are securely in line with those found nationally. We were delighted to see that the percentage of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE has risen so much. Most of you behave well and engage well in your lessons. Your curriculum is good and you told us how much you welcome the opportunities the school has to offer, such as American Football and Samba. We were very impressed to see many of you taking on responsibilities, such as those through the Leadership Academy.

Although you progress well, we believe that your progress could be even better. We have asked the school to share best practice in teaching more widely, to always give you clear criteria for success so that you can see for yourselves if you are learning well and what you need to do to improve your work. In addition, we have asked that, when school leaders observe your lessons, the focus is always on how well you are learning. You can help by telling your teachers in each of your lessons if you are unclear about how well you are learning.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your education at Woodham and to continue to play your part in its continuing success.

Yours sincerely

Alison Thomson
Lead inspector

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