

# Southfield Technology College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112394
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	378481
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lee Northern 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	466
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	94
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gordon McCullough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynda Dalkin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Moorclose Road Workington CA14 5BH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 29 lessons, each taught by a different member of staff. Of these, two were observed jointly with a member of staff from the school. Two 'learning walks', consisting of short visits to a series of lessons or small-group sessions, were conducted with the senior leaders from the school. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and school staff, and met with a small group of parents and carers. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documentation and examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. In addition, 89 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised and inspectors also examined questionnaires returned by staff and those from a representative sample of students.

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

- The current levels of achievement for all students in English and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of provision in meeting the needs of groups of students at risk of underachievement, especially those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well the curriculum and the quality of the care, guidance and support provided by the school meet the needs of low-attaining students and those at risk of disaffection.
- The extent to which leaders and managers at all levels have been effective in securing improvements in provision that meet the needs of all groups of students, including in the sixth form.

## Information about the school

Southfield is a smaller than average secondary school which serves the town of Workington and the surrounding rural areas. It works with a neighbouring school to manage and staff a joint sixth-form centre. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Almost all students are of White British heritage and there are very few students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above that found nationally, but the number with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The school has held specialist status for technology since 1999 and holds the Healthy Schools Award, Artsmark, Inclusion Mark, and the International Schools Award at Intermediate Level, and is an accredited centre for adventure learning.

**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

Southfield Technology College provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving standard of education. Some aspects are good and contribute strongly to improving outcomes for the students. These include the contribution made by the curriculum and the quality of the care and support. Many parents and carers value these highly. The comment, 'My children look forward to going to school each day and have excelled in many aspects of their lives,' exemplifies the extent to which the school devotes time and energy to working with its wider community. The impact of this work can be seen in the significant reduction in the numbers of students who are persistently absent, although the overall level of attendance remains slightly below the national average.

Students' attainment is broadly in line with the average seen nationally, although levels of attainment are slightly lower in English and mathematics. However, the school is successfully tackling the legacy of underachievement caused by previous staffing difficulties in mathematics and in supporting the significant minority of students who join the school with weaknesses in their literacy skills. As a result, learning and progress are satisfactory overall and improving. In lessons, the progress made by the most-able students at times slows because teaching does not consistently ensure they receive sufficient challenge.

The use of assessment information, underpinned by challenging targets, is much better than at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, the school accurately identifies individuals and groups of students for support through a wide-ranging programme of targeted intervention. However, not all teachers use this information to plan lessons that meet the needs of all the students in the class, particularly the most able, or those in need of support in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

The school has developed a wide-ranging and imaginative programme of professional development for staff. However, the skills of middle leaders in improving the quality of teaching are variable. As a result, there is variation in the overall quality of teaching and learning. This is seen, for example, in the contrast between lessons which encourage students to be more actively involved in their learning and those lessons where students rely too heavily on the teacher for guidance.

Leaders and managers at the school demonstrate good capacity to improve. The headteacher and the senior team have established a culture of continuous

improvement and have significantly raised expectations. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has improved many aspects of its work since the time of the previous inspection. Instances of inadequate performance have been successfully addressed and levels of accountability for students' performance have been greatly strengthened. Morale at the school is good and the drive for further improvement is very widely shared by staff at all levels.

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 achievement, including in English and mathematics, by:
  - developing the skills of middle leaders in driving improvements to teaching and learning in their subject areas
  - improving levels of attendance and further reducing the proportion of students who are persistently absent from school
  - further embedding work to promote literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Raise the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by:
  - increasing the opportunities in lessons for students to demonstrate what they know and understand so that teachers are more able to assess learning and provide additional support and challenge as needed
  - ensuring all teachers consistently use the assessment information available in order to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all groups of students in the class, particularly the most able
  - increasing the opportunities for students to be more actively involved in lessons and to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

<b>3</b>
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Levels of attainment on entry to the school differ from year to year, and vary from broadly the national average to slightly below. A significant minority of students join the school with weaknesses in their literacy skills. Students say they like coming to school and enjoy their lessons, reaching satisfactory levels of achievement overall. Older students, in particular, appreciate the efforts of staff to help them succeed. Students like working on tasks and activities in pairs or small groups and are responsible and considerate when working collaboratively. Inspection evidence confirms that achievement across the school for many groups of students, particularly those known to be eligible for free school meals, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, is rising as a result of the targeted intervention they receive. The school recognises the need to support many of its students to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, including those in the early stages of reading. This support is more consistently effective where it is provided in small groups or in one-to-one sessions than it is in mainstream lessons, where not all teaching places a

sufficiently sharp focus on reinforcing the literacy and numeracy skills of all students. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory in line with that of their peers.

The good behaviour of students contributes well to learning in lessons, and they are courteous and welcoming to visitors. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and of their responsibilities, choices and the consequences of their actions. As a result, parents and carers, students and staff all agree that the school provides a very safe environment, and students are very confident that staff will deal swiftly and effectively with any concerns or worries they may have. Students understand well the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, although a significant minority of students say they sometimes choose not to eat healthily when using the school canteen. The good contribution made by students to their school and community is particularly well seen through the work of the school council, which played a significant role in the introduction of the new school uniform.

Students' cultural development is enhanced through their work in art and design, which is a popular and successful part of the school's technology specialism. Students' basic skills are developed to a satisfactory level and all students follow an accredited programme in information and communication technology. The proportion of students not in education, employment or training when they leave school is broadly in line with the regional average.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Although no inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection, the proportion of teaching that is good or better is not high enough to more rapidly accelerate rates of progress. In the best lessons, students engage enthusiastically with tasks that are well matched to their abilities and interests. These lessons proceed with a brisk pace that does not inhibit learning. Good questioning enables teachers to assess accurately where barriers exist and where students are ready to move on quickly to

<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

more challenging tasks. In an outstanding modern foreign languages lesson for Year 7 students, characterised by good relationships and high expectations, students worked with great enthusiasm and engagement because the teacher provided many opportunities for them to demonstrate what they knew and understood. The teacher provided unobtrusive and effective support for some students' literacy skills, through their work both in English and in German. In less effective teaching and learning, students are unclear about what they are learning in the lesson and why. Such lessons are characterised by too narrow a range of activities or do not provide opportunities for students to work effectively together.

The curriculum makes a significant contribution to improving outcomes, through the quality of targeted support and in the good match of courses to students' needs. This is seen, for example, in students' high levels of attainment in science. Younger students, in particular, say they enjoy the opportunities they have through the recently accredited 'adventure learning' curriculum, including at an outdoor centre in Eskdale. The good care, guidance and support that students receive often begin before they join the school. Transition arrangements from primary schools, for example, during the 'pirate ship' and 'rocket' days offered through the specialism, are good. As a result of the improvements made to these aspects of provision, levels of attainment are rising.

*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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and managers provide a clear vision and drive for improvement. There is a regular programme for monitoring all aspects of the school's work and the use of assessment information is a significant factor in recent improvements. Leaders at all levels are effective at removing students' barriers to achievement. Lines of accountability have been clarified and strengthened and leaders at all levels are now held more routinely and rigorously to account for students' progress. As a result, the school has been conspicuously successful in reducing the differences in attainment between different groups of students, although the improvements seen in the achievement of more-able students have been less marked.

Improvement planning has an appropriate range of priorities, although not all success criteria are easily measurable. Good plans are in place to improve the rigour with which leaders and managers evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. The monitoring of teaching does not place sufficient emphasis on the quality of students' learning and progress and the outcomes of monitoring do not lead consistently to sharply focused improvement actions.

The effectiveness of the governing body is good; it is self-evaluative and has an accurate perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It meets its

statutory duties well. Safeguarding arrangements, including through partnerships with external agencies, are good and procedures to assure students' welfare at all times, including on trips and visits, are thorough. The school is a cohesive community; in particular, it understands its socio-economic context well. Although it provides a valuable international dimension to its work, the school recognises that more needs to be done to provide students with a greater understanding of religious, ethnic and cultural diversity across the United Kingdom. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for the 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	3
<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>3</b>

## Sixth form

This is a satisfactory and inclusive sixth form. Students' levels of attainment and progress have improved since the time of the previous inspection and unvalidated results for 2011 show achievement to be broadly in line with expectations, given students' attainment on entry to the sixth form. Students make good progress in their personal development and well-being, and they make a positive contribution to the sixth form and wider community.

The quality of leadership and management in the sixth form is good. Through the establishment of an executive group across both the partner schools to lead the sixth form, lines of accountability have been greatly strengthened. As a result, areas of weakness are being addressed and the overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. In the more effective lessons, teaching is well matched to the differing needs of students and there is a focus on the development of independent learning skills. The curriculum provides an appropriate range of programmes and courses, and the quality of the guidance given to students to help them to make appropriate choices is much improved. Refinements in the tracking of students' progress enable leaders and managers to identify and address underachievement promptly where it occurs.

Students say they are very appreciative of the advice and support they receive. They say they feel well prepared for the next phase of their lives and very few do not go on to higher or further education, employment or training.



*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaire responses received from parents and carers was in line with that normally seen for secondary schools. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were pleased with their child's experience at the school, and feel the school promotes safety and meets individual needs well. A similar proportion expressed the view that the school is well led and managed and that it ensures students are well prepared for their future lives and careers. A few parents expressed concerns that the school does not promote healthy lifestyles well and inspectors found that some students do not always choose to eat healthily from the choices provided in the school canteen.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southfield 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 466 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	37	49	55	4	4	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	25	28	61	69	1	1	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	44	43	48	4	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	43	45	51	2	2	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	39	50	56	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	34	52	58	4	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	24	55	62	8	9	3	3
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)	33	37	51	57	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	33	54	61	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	31	50	56	4	4	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	27	52	58	4	4	6	7
The school is led and managed effectively	31	35	51	57	4	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	45	42	47	4	4	2	2

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](http://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"> <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.**



20 October 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Southfield Technology College, Workington, CA14 5BH**

You will remember that a team of inspectors and I inspected your school recently. We took careful note of the views that you expressed in our meetings with you and in the questionnaires that you completed for us.

We judged that your school is providing you with a satisfactory and improving standard of education. In your meetings with us, you said that you valued the caring and safe atmosphere that the school provides. We found that the school promotes these aspects well.

The attainment of students in Year 11 in 2011 was in line with the average normally seen in schools nationally, although slightly lower in mathematics and English. Older students, in particular, told us they value the support they receive to help them to succeed. You said you enjoyed opportunities in lessons to be more actively involved in your learning and in working together in pairs or in small groups.

We have asked school leaders and managers and the governing body to ensure that standards continue to rise. We have also asked that the school continues to work with you and your families to promote the benefits of regular attendance. To improve the quality of teaching you receive, we have asked the school to ensure that all teaching regularly meets the needs of all students and provides more frequent opportunities for you to be more actively involved in your learning. We have also asked that teachers consistently provide some of you with opportunities to move on to more challenging work in lessons where this is appropriate.

You can play your part in improving Southfield Technology College by continuing to attend regularly, behaving well and working hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern  
Her Majesty's Inspector

