

High Tunstall College of Science

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111748
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	378349
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Charles Lowry

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the college roll	1,184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Shepherd
Headteacher	Mark Tilling
Date of previous college inspection	24 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
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This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons taught by 45 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body including the Chair, college senior leaders, middle managers, groups of teachers and staff responsible for safeguarding. In preparing for the inspection they considered a wide range of documents including the college's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and college policies, including the policy for safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey and analysed 164 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and 197 received from students.

Information about the college

High Tunstall College is a larger than average, mixed 11-16 comprehensive located to the West of Hartlepool. The college has a specialism in science. Most students are of White British heritage with a very small minority from other backgrounds. Few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The college has a resourced unit for disabled students and those with medical needs. The college admits a higher than average number of students at times other than the start of the academic year. The college is a holder of the Eco Schools Green Flag Award and was the winner of the Education Business Award for Science in 2008 and 2010. In 2011 the college was awarded International School status and also met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The current headteacher was not in post at the time of the previous inspection, having joined the college in September 2010.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- High Tunstall is a satisfactory and improving college. Senior leaders have taken decisive action to address previous underperformance in mathematics and modern foreign languages so that most students now make satisfactory progress. High Tunstall is not yet good because teaching is not consistently good enough. Students' achievement is only satisfactory and some groups, for example students known to be entitled to free school meals, do not achieve as well as their peers. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good and outstanding practice. Recent work by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning through focused staff development, has led to an increase in the proportion of good or better teaching. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and marking of students' work, both within and between subjects, remain.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most students feel safe and are happy to come to college every day. The college has worked hard to improve attendance. This has been particularly effective at Key Stage 3 but has had less impact at Key Stage 4 so that the attendance of some groups, for example students entitled to free school meals, is below average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the college which is rightly focused on raising achievement. Development planning is thorough; however, there are too many development priorities and the success criteria do not always relate to the impact on students' outcomes. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a satisfactory foundation for students to move on to the next stage. However, the college's use of learning pathways and the policy of early entry for GCSE mathematics has limited opportunities for some students.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching so that all groups of students make good or better progress by:
 - sharing more effectively the good practice that already exists in the college
 - using the available data on students' performance to effectively plan to meet the needs of all groups of students, particularly those entitled to free school meals
 - ensuring teachers use questioning effectively so students have opportunities to think more deeply about their learning and improve their understanding
 - making sure that the policies relating to marking, assessment and behaviour are consistently applied across the college
 - eliminating low-level disruption in those lessons where it occurs.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by:
 - continuing to rigorously monitor the attendance of students at the college and providing support for those whose attendance is a cause for concern, particularly students known to be entitled to free school meals.
- Sharpen college development planning by:
 - focusing on fewer initiatives and concentrating on those which will have the greatest impact on students' outcomes
 - building progress checks into the planning cycle so that governors are able to regularly monitor and evaluate actions taken to achieve college development priorities
 - making sure college self-evaluation is less descriptive and focuses more closely on the impact that the work of the college is having on students' outcomes.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Standards of attainment reached by most groups of students are broadly average. The proportion of students leaving the college with five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has risen over the last three years and was significantly above average in 2010 and 2011. However, gains in English and mathematics have been more modest but are now accelerating. Given the students' starting points this represents satisfactory achievement for the majority. There are, however, some variations in attainment and progress. For example, in the college's specialist subject, science, attainment is significantly above average. In mathematics and modern foreign languages, however, there was significant underachievement last year. The senior leadership took decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, progress has accelerated in both subjects and it is now satisfactory for most groups of students. The gap between the performance of students entitled to free school meals and their peers has narrowed but remains marked.

There has been some variation in the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Students at school action achieve at least in line with their peers, whereas the achievement of those at school action plus is below. Strengthened leadership of this area of the college and the introduction of rigorous tracking of students' progress has ensured that the gap is rapidly closing.

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel that their child is making good progress. However, inspection evidence indicates that the progress made by students in most subjects is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of parents and carers who expressed an opinion feel that their child is well taught and most feel that the college helps their child develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, most students who responded to the questionnaire feel that they learn a lot in lessons and that teaching is good at the college. While lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work show that there are examples of good and outstanding practice, teaching at the college is satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned to a common format; however, not all teachers use this effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of all groups of students.

Where teaching is good or better, teachers have high expectations of students' achievement and behaviour. They adapt activities well to provide suitable levels of challenge for all groups of students. A variety of tasks and teaching approaches are used to engage and enthuse. Students' progress in lessons is accelerated when they are given opportunities to work collaboratively and develop their own ideas. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson outstanding teaching promoted excellent learning when students worked in groups to research the properties of a family of elements and then had to present their findings to the rest of the class. The groups then critically evaluated each other's presentations against a clear set of success criteria, providing detailed and objective feedback.

Where teaching is satisfactory, planning does not take account of the needs of the different groups of learners in the class. Students spend too long working on low-level tasks that lack challenge, fail to stimulate students' interests and lower expectations. Often teachers talk for too long and this slows the learning of some students. Teachers use a limited range of questions that only invite short answers from their students. Opportunities are missed for students to show their understanding by providing extended answers to probing questions.

The teaching of disabled students and those with special needs is satisfactory. When teaching assistants are effectively deployed they provide an appropriate level of support for their students.

Teaching provides opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in one Year 8 science lesson students were asked to reflect on the cost of satellite technology. Group work is used effectively to develop students' social and teamworking skills.

The college's systems for tracking students' progress are regular and robust. The college has recently introduced a new marking policy. The best marking helps students to improve their knowledge and understanding through the precise identification of strengths and areas for development. However, the quality of marking is variable and inspectors saw examples of students' work that had not been marked.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Generally the college is a calm, friendly and happy place. As one parent commented, 'My child loves coming to school'. Most students are lively, ebullient, socialise well and have good attitudes to learning. A minority of parents, carers and students expressed concern about the standard of behaviour around the college and in lessons. Inspection evidence found that, when the teaching was engaging, students' behaviour was good and they responded well to the activities they were given to do. However, occasionally, where teaching fails to capture students' interests, a few students become restless and disrupt the learning of others. The college is aware of this and has recently introduced a new behaviour for learning policy. This is already showing signs of improvement. For example, there has been a reduction in the number of times senior leaders are called out to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and a large majority of parents and carers feel that the college deals with incidents of bullying effectively. Their children agree.

The newly appointed Year 11 prefects are ambassadors for the college, a visible presence providing support for their peers, particularly younger students. They also contribute to the smooth running of the college by undertaking duties, with their teachers, at breaks and lunchtimes.

The college has taken positive action to improve attendance, with some success. A full-time attendance officer monitors attendance carefully and there are some striking examples of students improving their attendance. Nevertheless, attendance is below average overall and some groups, for example students entitled to free school meals, have rates of attendance well below that of their peers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher was appointed after a turbulent period in the college's history. He demonstrates drive and determination to improve standards across the college. Ably supported by colleagues in the senior leadership team he has reviewed performance management systems and staff structures. This has led to greater accountability and the development of a culture that challenges everyone to aspire to the highest possible standards. It has also led to improvements in teaching and learning, for example in the improved progress of students in mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, some opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning have been missed. As a consequence, achievement overall remains satisfactory and some groups, for example students entitled to free school meals, are not progressing at the same rate as their peers.

The resource unit is well managed and disabled students and those with medical needs are integrated into the life of the school. Governors, leaders and managers have a sound understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development. However, self-evaluation does not always take enough account of the impact that work of the college is having on students' outcomes. Development planning is detailed and informed by self-evaluation. However, it is short term and the success criteria are not always systematically linked to whole-college priorities.

The college curriculum is satisfactory. Students are able to study a range of subjects at GCSE and there is a choice of vocational options, which prepares them adequately for the next stage. However, the use of learning pathways from Year 7 has restricted subject choice for some students. In addition, the policy of entering every student early for mathematics

GCSE has had an adverse impact on the progress of some groups, for example the more able. As part of the college's curriculum review and to improve equality of opportunity senior leaders have rightly taken the decision to dispense with learning pathways and abandon the policy of early entry for all students in mathematics.

The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students are given opportunities for reflection in assembly and learn about other faiths and cultures in the college's citizenship, philosophy and ethics programme. Students who arrive at the college at times other than the start of the year are made to feel welcome.

The college's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and make a contribution to most students feeling safe. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing areas for development identified at its previous inspection and so has demonstrated satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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



22 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of High Tunstall College of Science, Hartlepool, TS26 0LQ

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your college. We would particularly like to thank those of you who gave up your time to meet with us and those of you who completed the questionnaire. This letter is to explain our findings.

The college is providing you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education under the leadership of the headteacher. He has a good understanding of what the college does well and what needs improving. For example, one of the college's key priorities is to improve the quality of teaching and we agree with that. While most students leave the college at the end of Year 11 with five or more high grade GCSEs, their progress in some subjects is not as good as it should be. You told us that the college was a safe place but some of you were concerned about disruptive behaviour in a few lessons. This is one of the areas that the new behaviour for learning policy that you told us about is addressing.

The headteacher and his team are very ambitious for the college and want it to be as good as it possibly can be. To help, we have given them the following areas for improvement:

- Increase the number of lessons that are at least good or better by making sure teachers share ideas with each other about what works well.
- Use information about your performance, plan lessons that you will find challenging and help you make good progress.
- Improve the way teachers question you in lessons so that you have to think more deeply about the subject.
- Make sure that your work is marked regularly and to the college's new marking policy.
- Make sure that all teachers consistently use the behaviour for learning policy to eliminate disruptive behaviour in lessons.
- Improve attendance and particularly the attendance of those students entitled to free school meals.
- Make the college's planning sharper so that staff concentrate on those activities that will have the greatest effect on your achievement.

You can play your part by working hard and attending regularly. We would like to send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Lead Inspector

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