

# Walker Technology College

Waverdale Avenue, Walker, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE6 4LA

**Inspection dates** 21–22 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher has driven rapid improvement across the school since the last inspection.
- All groups of students make good progress from their different starting points. Standards in the school are rising quickly year on year, because students are convinced that if they work hard, they will succeed.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and eager to improve their skills further. Their dedication to helping students achieve their best is acknowledged and appreciated by students in all age groups.
- Students behave well in lessons and their behaviour in corridors is excellent. They feel safe and show high levels of respect for themselves, staff and each other.
- Excellent pastoral care makes sure that students are well cared for and know where to turn for help.
- The sixth form is good. Good leadership has developed the curriculum well since the last inspection, and this is successfully helping students to move on to higher education, training or employment.
- Senior leaders fully support the headteacher's ambitious vision for the school. Their work ensures that progress is rapid and sustained.
- Middle leaders, including subject and pastoral leaders, are skilled and determined in their drive to further improve outcomes for students.
- Governors are highly supportive of the school. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and are fully involved in improving teaching by holding staff to account for students' performance.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Provision provided by the Year 7 Catch-up funding, does not include all the students who would benefit from the school's well-planned and successful programme to improve writing.
- Writing in other subjects is not well enough developed to allow students, especially those of lower ability, to demonstrate their good learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, and other members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and students.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding policies and procedures, information about students’ progress and attainment, and the school’s own evaluation of its performance.
- Inspectors examined work in students’ books and listened to students from Years 7 and 8 read.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school’s most recent parent survey, and of 50 questionnaires returned by staff.

## Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Julie Rimmer	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector
Frank Cain	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Walker Technology College is larger than the average size secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average, so too is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school makes off-site provision for fewer than 10 students.
- Walker Technology College is a member of the recently incorporated Riverside Trust of schools and offers services to its feeder primary schools. Among these is use of the Achievement Bus, which collects children and students who find difficulty in attending school regularly.
- The school made radical changes to staffing in July 2013 when 20 staff left the school.

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

- Improve the quality of students' writing, especially that of lower attainers, so that they can show their good learning across all of the subjects they study by:
  - ensuring all of those students whose writing is below the expected level for their age when they join the school in Year 7 are included in the school's successful programmes to improve students' writing
  - introducing clear policies and practices to guide all subject staff, in line with current plans, in how to improve opportunities for writing in all classes, but especially the lower ability students
  - providing suitable training and resources for staff to support writing in their subjects, in accordance with the school's planned programme for later in the term.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that is usually well-below average. Inspection evidence, school and published data, including GCSE results already achieved, show that this year's results are likely to be at the national average for the percentage of students achieving five A\* to C grades in GCSE, including English and mathematics. This marks a year-on-year trend of improvement since the school was last inspected in 2012.
- The proportion of students making expected progress and the proportion making more than expected progress compares favourably with national averages. This is because the school sets ambitious targets for all groups of students and carefully tracks their progress towards these, taking action when progress slows.
- The most able students are well supported to achieve their challenging targets. Increasing numbers are now reaching the highest grades, especially in English literature and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make the same good progress as others because of carefully planned teaching and through the effective intervention programmes designed to meet the individual needs of these students.
- The school's pupil premium funding is targeted effectively to enable the students it is intended to support to achieve as well as others in the school. Gaps between their attainment and that of others in the school have narrowed rapidly. In the current year, their attainment now matches that of other students in English and mathematics.
- Students who enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age benefit from carefully planned teaching programmes, provided through the Year 7 Catch-up funding, which helps them to rapidly overcome obstacles to their learning. Senior leaders recognise that there is scope to extend these programmes to benefit more students with weak literacy skills.
- Elsewhere in the school, lower ability students do not have effective writing skills to record their good learning in different subjects. Their verbal responses in lessons show better understanding than their writing suggests.
- Reading is very well promoted for all groups of students. Silent reading is a feature of registration sessions, which gives all students regular opportunities for research or to read for enjoyment. Students who find reading difficult are included in the daily 'Rise and Read' sessions and all students between Year 7 and Year 9 benefit from weekly reading sessions in English lessons.
- The few students who occasionally attend vocational off-site provision achieve as well as other students at the end of Year 11.
- Early entry for GCSE mathematics and English language is used for a high proportion of students. In all cases, students continue with mathematics and English studies till the end of Year 11.
- Good quality, inclusive provision in the sixth form enables students to thrive and achieve well. There is a clear trend of improvement of students achieving higher grades because of the improved curriculum and higher-quality teaching. Changes to the subjects offered have increased numbers joining the sixth form by providing a wider range of pathways which enable students to progress to higher education or careers of their choice.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved well since the previous inspection because senior leaders have established robust systems to provide good challenge and support to improve teachers' skills. The amount of outstanding teaching is increasing well.
- Teachers are ambitious for students to achieve their best. They have high expectations of

students' effort and engagement. Teachers have convinced students that they can do well if they work hard, so they do. This strong work ethic is helping to accelerate learning at a good rate. Students in Year 11, working on mathematics revision, made exceptional progress in improving the speed and accuracy of their calculations because of the high level of challenge provided. Skilful questioning was used very well to probe and extend students' thinking.

- Regular checks on students' work during lessons, and through assessments and tests, are used effectively to provide the right level of challenge and to adjust teaching to ensure that all students are able to make good progress. Students in Year 8 made rapid progress in constructing graphs to record their investigations into magnetism because of the teacher's astute evaluations of how well they were managing the task.
- Good systems have been introduced to improve the quality of marking and feedback to students to ensure that they know what to do to improve their work. The majority of students' work is marked regularly, in line with the school's policy for giving clear advice to students on errors or misunderstandings. However, sometimes students are not always allowed time to make these corrections and improve their work, which means that the teachers' conscientious marking is not having the intended impact on accelerating students' progress.
- Small group work and special programmes to help students with low literacy skills work well to increase their skills and confidence for learning. A good example is the 'Rise and Read' programme designed to improve reading skills quickly. Younger students enjoy these well-planned activities because they can see how their reading is improving. They get a real buzz of pleasure when they find success by showing how well they have understood and remembered stories.
- Teaching in the sixth form has improved very well since the previous inspection. Training and teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject are key factors in this improvement. Frequent sessions for face-to-face feedback between students and teachers provide individual support for students to improve their knowledge and understanding of topics. This helps students to deepen their understanding, and develop the confidence to ask and answer questions about their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. It is exemplary when students move around the school. Students follow the rules well; they are courteous and civilised during transition from class to class in this large school.
- Students consistently show enthusiasm for learning and a willingness to work together. In some lessons, their attitudes are outstanding. Students are confident to express their views or offer an answer even if they are unsure, because they know they will be shown respect by their classmates. Students recognise the strength of teachers' commitment to helping them do their best, frequently giving up their time to support students to improve.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are well known to staff, who are quick to spot any changes in students' performance or attitudes and take action to get them back on track. Students feel safe in school and have a mature understanding of e-safety.
- Students have a detailed understanding of different types of bullying, including prejudice-based and cyber-bullying gained through teaching in the curriculum and through visiting experts to the school.
- Students spoken to by inspectors, and the overwhelming majority of parents and staff feel that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- There is a strong team approach to the management of behaviour and safety. Students are closely monitored and interventions put in place early so that individuals are not prevented from achieving well. Exclusions have declined rapidly since the previous inspection and are below the national average.
- Attendance has improved to average because of the school's determination to reduce persistent

absence. Innovative strategies such as the attendance bus help parents get their children to school more regularly.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher's ambitious vision for the school, together with his steely determination to raise students' achievement to outstanding, have driven rapid improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved significantly, so too has the achievement of all groups of students; provision and leadership in the sixth form are now good, and attendance is rising.
- The headteacher's vision is ably promoted by senior leaders who are unrelenting in their determination to develop the highest-quality provision and support for students. The role of middle leaders has developed well and they now make a significant and growing contribution to school improvement. Staff morale is high and a strong team ethos is accelerating improvement as staff willingly share good practice.
- Checks on the school's performance by senior and middle leaders are comprehensive, regular and rigorous. The school's evaluations of its work are robust and accurate: they lead to actions which target the right priorities. An example is the school's current plan to increase the accountability of all departments for improving students' writing skills through focused professional development and revisions to current policy to make explicit new expectations and monitoring arrangements.
- Students' good progress is driven by aspirational target-setting, rigorous systems which underpin frequent checks on their performance, and effective intervention to address any under-achievement.
- Improvements to teaching have been achieved through robust management of teachers' performance and frequent high-quality professional development for all staff to support improvement. Staff whose teaching is not consistently good are placed on coaching programmes, which quickly help them to develop the skills to provide for good progress for all of their students.
- The curriculum is reviewed regularly and is well adapted to meet the needs of individuals, so that there is equal opportunity for all to succeed. For example, additional provision for reading in Key Stage 3 ensures that those students who join the school with low reading ages are well supported to catch up. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the range of courses is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs and aspirations of older students and provides appropriate qualifications for them to progress to the next stage.
- Extra-curricular activities are diverse and much appreciated by students. The school's ambitious work ethos and the rich experiences provided for students promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Students are well informed about progression routes as they move through the school. Links with other providers and employers mean students are able to make informed choices about future pathways.
- Partnerships make a strong contribution to the school's accelerating effectiveness. For example, close links with feeder primary schools in the Riverside Trust and an extended transition in the summer term helps prepare students for the move to secondary school.
- This rapidly improving school receives light touch support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are strongly committed to improving the school. Active links with subject departments provide them with clear insight into the school's work. This involvement, as well as detailed information from senior leaders, ensures governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that funding is carefully allocated to achieve good value from spending decisions. For example, they are aware of the impact of pupil premium spending and hold leaders robustly to account. Governors are rigorous in their management of the headteacher's performance and only award salary

progression to staff whose targets have been met. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met, and that staff and students are safe on site.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108525
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	442196

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

<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>	1,050
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	121
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Wood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Collier
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 December 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2958660
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