

High Tunstall College of Science

Elwick Road, Hartlepool, County Durham, TS26 0LQ

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- GCSE results in 2012 and 2013 showed that students had underachieved.
- In both years there was a large gap between the performance of students supported by pupil premium and other students.
- Recent improvements in teaching have not yet secured levels of progress in mathematics in line with national expectations by Year 11.
- Teaching still requires further improvement because it does not always promote good progress, especially for lower ability groups.
- Although students generally write at expected levels for their ages they often lack confidence in speaking in class.
- The college is not yet doing enough to increase students' vocabulary or focusing sufficiently in improving reading and comprehension skills, especially for the lower ability students.
- In a small proportion of lessons, students become restless and lose concentration because the pace of learning is too slow.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and his senior team, with effective assistance from middle managers, have improved the climate for learning throughout the college.
- Recent improvements in teaching are lifting rates of progress in Years 7 to 10 towards, and often beyond expected levels.
- The gap between the performance of students supported by pupil premium and other students is closing quickly.
- Students behave well in lessons and when moving around the college. They say they feel safe.
- The college has a very good system for setting challenging targets for students and monitoring their progress towards them.
- Governors have supported the college very effectively through a period of significant change and have helped to secure improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, including four jointly with senior managers.
- They looked at a wide range of students' written work, especially in English, mathematics, science and humanities.
- They held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject managers, representatives of the governing body, members of staff, groups of students, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at many documents, including the school's view of its performance, improvement planning, records of students' progress, safeguarding procedures and incident logs.
- They took account of 53 responses to the on-line (Parent View) questionnaire and questionnaire responses from members of staff.

Inspection team

John Paddick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

Clive Petts

Additional Inspector

Julie McGrane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- High Tunstall College of Science is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British.
- Proportions of students supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- There is a specialist resource unit for students with physical disability and medical needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.)
- The college enters a very small number of students early for GCSE in mathematics.
- A very small number of students attend vocational courses off-site.
- A few students are educated off-site at Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of students to consistently good, especially in mathematics, and for the least able by:
 - raising the quality of teaching to consistently good and more frequently to outstanding
 - developing the best strategies for teaching lower ability students and eliminating restlessness in class
 - extending the current work on literacy to enhance students' vocabulary and enable them to further develop and use their skills in speaking, reading and comprehension in all of the subjects that they study.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment on entry to the college is either average or, in some years, slightly above. Broadly average proportions of students arrive with expected levels in English and mathematics.
- Although GCSE results rose in 2013 compared to the previous year they still revealed underachievement by many groups of students. There was a large gap between the performance of students supported through pupil premium and other students in English and mathematics. The difference was more than a full GCSE grade.
- The effect of previous underachievement remains evident in several subjects because some groups of students are still behind where they should be. Inspectors also noticed that many students' vocabulary is limited and many are not confident to speak at length to the whole class. Some students with limited reading skills are not catching up quickly enough.
- College progress records show that GCSE results are likely to improve again this year, with English and mathematics again showing substantial rises. Inspectors have checked the way that the college makes its predictions and are happy that they are robust and accurate. Predicted results in English would represent broadly average progress while those in mathematics would be slightly lower. The gap in performance between students supported by pupil premium and other students is closing.
- The very effective focus on rising levels of attainment and progress are clearly evident in the current Years 7 to 10. In these year groups, progress in many subjects is good. For example, in English and mathematics progress rates compare very favourably with national expectations and sometimes exceed them.
- An example of the rising standards is very evident in Year 9 where higher ability students in the top sets are fully competent to use trigonometry to calculate distances, rearrange algebraic formulae with confidence and solve quadratic equations. Their work is extensive, very well presented and demonstrates very good rates of learning. Middle ability students' work in mathematics in Year 9 is also extensive and well presented.
- Students generally have sufficiently developed numerical and writing skills by Years 10 and 11 to be able to apply them to work in other subjects, for example calculations in science and explanations in geography and history.
- The college's records show that the use of pupil premium funding is becoming increasingly effective. Gaps between the progress rates of students eligible for support from it compared to other students are closing quite quickly, especially in Years 7 and 8. Well-planned interventions and additional support for students who join in Year 7 with low basic skills are helping them to close the gap on their peers.
- Students who have special educational needs or disabilities are now making similar progress to that of other students. This represents a significant improvement over the last two years and includes the students in the special resource unit. The college enters a small number of students early for GCSE in mathematics. This is to maximise their chances as they often have challenging personal circumstances. The very small numbers of students who attend vocational courses designed to lead to future employment off-site do well. Those at Hartlepool PRU progress well with their GCSE courses.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There have been recent improvements in the quality of teaching in most subjects but the GCSE results of 2012 and 2013 show that it has not been consistently good over time. The legacy of previous underachievement that is still evident in some classes confirms this.
- The majority of teaching is now supporting good rates of learning and progress in Years 7 to 10 but the profile is not strong enough to fully close all the gaps between where the students are and where they should be. This is because there is little outstanding teaching and a small but

significant proportion that still requires improvement.

- Inspectors' scrutiny of students' work, especially in English, mathematics, humanities and science shows that teaching is promoting better progress for average and above average ability students than those who are below average. This is also confirmed through their observations of lower ability students in lessons.
- While teaching is often promoting good progress in terms of knowledge and understanding in most subjects, teachers in many subjects are not spending enough time in increasing students' vocabulary, developing reading comprehension or improving speaking skills.
- Teachers have excellent records showing exactly where students are in terms of attainment so it is easy for them to see who is reaching the college's challenging targets and who is not. The marking of students' work has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Marking routinely points out errors and indicates how students can improve their work. There are many examples of teachers setting extra exercises for individual students to ensure that they fully master topics they have studied.
- In lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge and effective class management skills usually generate a good climate for learning. Classroom assistants are well utilised. Lessons are well planned and work is clearly explained. Frequently, lessons are brought to life with well-chosen photographic shots and videos. Students respond well because they are eager to learn and there are many examples of much being achieved in the time available.
- Teaching is improving strongly in response to managers' initiatives to raise the pace of learning and progress. After the disappointing GCSE results in 2012 and 2013, managers have taken a far more rigorous approach to measuring progress made by all groups of students as they move from Year 7 to Year 11. It is clear that there is now no room for complacency and teachers are expected to take full responsibility for ensuring that their groups make good progress towards their GCSE targets. The success of these measures has resulted in higher expectations of students and a much better pace of learning.
- Students say that their lessons are now much better in many subjects than they were a year or two ago. They really value the improvements in the way that teachers mark their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good.
- They are keen to learn, well-mannered and respect staff and each other. They show a pride in their appearance and arrive punctually for lessons. They play their part in ensuring that the atmosphere for learning in class is generally good and often outstanding. Just occasionally, some students become restless in class and inattentive when the pace of learning is too slow. Evidence strongly suggests that the good behaviour that inspectors observed is typical of the college on a day to day basis.
- Participation in a wide range of activities outside lessons is a strong feature of students' life at the college and very effectively promotes their personal development. They enjoy and derive benefit from taking part in activities such as student voice, sport, musical productions, competitions, charity events, voluntary work in primary schools, foreign visits, visits to art galleries and plays.
- A rigorous system for tracking students' attendance is having a positive effect. Over the last two years attendance has improved to close to average figures and persistent absence has reduced. Exclusions for poor conduct are below average and falling.
- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students say that they feel perfectly safe in college and would be confident to approach staff if they had any concerns or worries. Good levels of staff supervision at breaks and lunchtimes mean that students feel secure because they know that there will always be an adult on hand to help should the need arise. Procedures and policies for child protection and safeguarding meet all requirements and members of staff implement them well.
- Students know how to keep safe and can explain potential risks to their welfare. Inspectors

interviewed random groups of students at lunchtime and they confirmed that racist incidents and bullying are rare. They understand homophobic bullying but can recall very few instances of it. College records confirm this positive picture.

The leadership and management are good

- The college is improving quickly because the headteacher, senior team and governors have developed a relentless and effective focus on the climate for learning, behaviour, the quality of teaching and the amount of progress that students are making. Members of staff say that they fully support the drive for improvements. Staff morale is very good and an atmosphere of increased expectation of students pervades the college. Students confirm that the college has improved substantially over the last two years.
- In that same period, managers have worked very effectively to improve the rates of attendance of all groups of students, particularly those who are more difficult to reach.
- The college has good procedures for measuring how well it is doing so managers know what is going well and what needs to be improved. The very good system of tracking students' progress is a key feature because it enables them to respond to any perceived slippage or underachievement as soon as it becomes evident. Development planning is of good quality and managers check to ensure that intended improvements actually materialise according to specified timescales.
- Effective management of teaching through robust classroom observations is substantially increasing the amount of good practice. Managers monitor teaching well and provide members of staff with appropriate areas for development. Performance management arrangements are effective.
- Governors and leaders have considered carefully how to provide a curriculum which best fits the requirements of students of all abilities. Consequently, students have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of options in Years 10 and 11. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Equal opportunities have a high profile and where managers perceive that gaps in the performance of groups of students become apparent they make strenuous and effective methods to close them.
- Middle managers, many of whom are recently appointed, play their part in the drive for improvements well. They are keen to ensure that their subjects perform well at GCSE and ensure that tracking data on students' progress provided to senior managers is more accurate than formerly.
- The college is well-supported by the local authority through the provision of robust monitoring and the provision of extra expertise when appropriate. The amount of assistance is now reducing quickly as the college improves.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of what the college does well and know where improvements still have to be made. They have a clear understanding of how the college sets challenging targets for students and know how GCSE results and progress rates compare with the national picture. They understand how the college uses pupil premium funding and know how quickly gaps in performance are closing. Governors challenge managers effectively to ensure that performance management arrangements are robust and salary progressions are merited. A group of governors has a very active role in its fortnightly observation of the college at work. This enables other governors to receive regular updates about improvements that are taking place.

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

Unique reference number	111748
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	430882

This inspection of the school 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 school roll	1,034
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Agar
Headteacher	Mark Tilling
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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