

Seaton Burn College, A Specialist Business and Enterprise School

Dudley Lane, Seaton Burn, Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 6EJ

Inspection dates 14–15 October 2015

Overall effectiveness **Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors have shown weak leadership. They have failed to tackle pupils' underachievement and weaknesses in teachers' assessments.
- Leaders, governors and teachers do not have high enough expectations of themselves or pupils.
- Pupils' achievement is not good enough, particularly in English and mathematics.
- There are wide gaps between the progress made by disadvantaged and other groups of pupils. It is a similarly dispiriting picture for pupils with special educational needs.
- Governors have failed to take early and decisive action to hold leaders to account for poor results.
- Teachers rarely use assessment information effectively to make sure pupils get the right level of challenge.
- Teachers' questioning skills are underdeveloped.
- Leaders have not been effective in providing a curriculum that builds securely on pupils' learning in Key Stage 2 or prepares them well enough for the rigours of Key Stage 4.
- Pupils do not attend regularly enough.
- The information leaders have about the quality of teaching and pupils' work has not been used effectively to bring about rapid improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils who are most in need are supported very well to overcome difficulties and maintain their education.
- Sixth-form pupils make better progress on vocational courses than they do on academic courses. The sixth-form provision is stronger than that in the main school but nevertheless requires improvement.
- Pupils, including those in the sixth form, confirm they feel safe and happy. Adults and pupils have warm relationships. Pupils' behaviour is generally calm and friendly.
- In the short time he has been in post, the acting Principal has taken swift action to get the college back on track. It is too early to say whether the actions have been effective.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better across all subjects and all key stages by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently take into account what pupils have already learned
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially for the most- and least-able pupils
 - teachers' assessments are accurate
 - teachers' questioning skills are improved.
- Rapidly improve pupils' progress across all subjects, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs by making sure that:
 - pupils' writing and presentation skills are developed
 - teachers' feedback consistently helps pupils to revise their work and understand exactly what they need to do next to improve
 - the Key Stage 3 curriculum builds securely on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, and prepares them for the increased demands of Key Stage 4
 - attendance is improved and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is reduced.
- Take swift action to improve the effectiveness of leaders and governors so they can drive rapid improvement by ensuring that:
 - leaders consistently use the information from the checks they do on the quality of teaching and pupils' work to plan for rapid improvement
 - a 'no-excuses' culture is developed and teachers and leaders are held robustly to account for pupils' progress
 - the long-term future of the college is secured by strengthening the senior leadership team
 - governors hold the college to account for the performance of all groups of pupils
 - new initiatives are planned, with clear success criteria and measurable 'milestones'.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders do not have high enough expectations of teachers or pupils. Too much time is wasted making excuses for poor performance instead of taking robust action. Last year, results were below the government's floor standards, the lowest level of acceptable attainment and progress. The proportion of pupils gaining five good-quality GCSEs, including English and mathematics, improved this year but remains well below average and significantly adrift from leaders' high and inaccurate predictions for summer 2015.
- Leaders have failed to narrow the wide gaps in achievement between disadvantaged and other pupils. This is also the case for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The pupil premium funding has not been used well enough to make any significant improvement in disadvantaged pupils' achievement.
- Aspects highlighted for improvement in the previous inspection report have not been tackled effectively by the college's leaders. In particular, teachers' use of assessment information to provide effective support and challenge for pupils of different abilities has become a significant weakness.
- Leaders are currently heavily reliant on external support. This support has been slow in coming because the local authority did not move with sufficient speed when pupils' achievement began to decline in 2013. Support is now gaining momentum; the college has benefited from a review of the quality of teaching and officers are helping leaders to check on the quality of teaching and assessment. The local authority has also brokered help from an experienced headteacher of a local outstanding school. This arrangement is in its infancy and it is too soon to say whether it has made a difference.
- The arrangements for holding teachers accountable for pupils' progress lack rigour. However, this has recently improved and new performance management arrangements more directly link pupils' performance to teachers' pay and rewards. There are examples of teachers being challenged when they have not improved their practice following support but this has not been consistent.
- Leaders' planning and evaluation of the college's work are weak. Leaders do not identify what success will look like and they are not clear enough in highlighting what they expect to see at interim checks.
- Leaders check regularly on the quality of teaching and pupils' work but they have not used this information effectively to improve teaching. Written feedback to teachers focuses too much on what teachers do, rather than the impact their teaching is having on pupils' learning.
- College leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching has not been successful. There are regular opportunities for teachers to improve their practice and this is generally well focused. For example, information from lesson observations suggested that teachers' questioning skills needed improving. As a result of training, teachers are now directing questions to particular pupils, but the quality of their questioning skills remains a weakness.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has not been successful in building on pupils' learning in Key Stage 2. Teachers have Key Stage 2 test results and teacher assessments, but they do not always understand what this represents in terms of pupils' abilities or what they have learned. As a result, too many pupils repeat things they have already learnt at primary school. A few older pupils who spoke to inspectors reported that they felt ill-prepared for the amount of writing they had to do in Key Stage 4. Scrutiny of Key Stage 3 pupils' books confirms that they are rarely asked to write at length.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is stronger and pupils enjoy the choices they have to study a wide range of subjects, including some vocational choices. However, because teachers' and leaders' expectations of what Key Stage 3 pupils are capable of are too low, pupils do not make enough progress over time.
- The sporting and creative abilities of pupils are supported by a range of clubs and activities outside the school day. Uptake of these additional activities is good and pupils also develop their cultural and enterprise understanding through a programme of trips and visits.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive strong support from pastoral staff who know them well. However, support for their academic progress is weak and fragmented. This is because leaders do not have a cohesive approach to supporting teachers in meeting these pupils' needs.
- Opportunities are provided for pupils to debate difficult subjects; consequently, they are comfortable in expressing their views. As a result, they are generally accepting of difference and respect rules.
- The new acting Principal has started to put sensible changes in place. For example, a new marking policy is helping pupils to reflect on the quality of their work. However, he had been in post only five weeks at the time of the inspection so it is not possible to evaluate the success of many new initiatives. He has

quickly gained the support and approval of staff. The acting Principal has a significant teaching commitment, reducing his time to ensure new ways of working are embedded swiftly.

- The college should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have been too slow to recognise and then tackle weaknesses in leadership and the significant decline in standards since the previous inspection. Governors have been too easily convinced by excuses offered by senior leaders for the poor progress made by pupils in English and mathematics over the past two years. Minutes of governing body meetings confirm that only one or two governors have offered robust challenge to senior leaders about the progress, attendance and exclusion rates of disadvantaged pupils.
 - Governors have made ill-judged decisions about securing high-quality leadership. For example, they agreed a secondment for the previous Principal without ensuring that the remaining leaders had sufficient time and experience to drive improvement. The process to recruit a new Principal and short-term measures to increase time and support for current leaders are under way. However, until this happens, the capacity of current leaders to secure rapid and sustained improvement is fragile.
 - The governing body's statutory duty to make sure safeguarding policies are up to date and reviewed annually has not been met. Despite this weakness, arrangements to safeguard pupils and work with parents are strong. Staff know how to identify risks and what to do if they are worried. This includes the college's duty to prevent pupils being drawn into terrorism and spot pupils who are at risk of becoming missing from education.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching across the college is too variable. Too much teaching is lacklustre, where teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils of different abilities can do. This is particularly marked in classes where pupils have a wide range of ability. As a result, there are wide gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- There are weaknesses in teachers' assessment of pupils' work. Teachers often fail to take into account what pupils have already learned when they plan lessons. Consequently, the most-able pupils find the work too easy, and the least-able pupils struggle to keep up.
- A new marking scheme has recently got under way but it is too soon to evaluate how effective this is. Pupils' books demonstrate that teachers are, on the whole, using the policy and that pupils are using comments to correct errors. The quality of the comments teachers make is inconsistent. Nevertheless, there are examples where marking and feedback to pupils are making a real difference. In these examples, teachers focus sharply on what pupils have achieved and are precise in identifying the next steps pupils should take to improve their work.
- The teaching of writing in Key Stage 3 is hampered by teachers' frequent use of worksheets that do not have enough space for pupils to write at length. Consequently, pupils' written answers are short and underdeveloped.
- The quality of teachers' questions varies too widely. There are teachers who ask probing questions that reveal the extent of pupils' understanding and help them to think long and hard about difficult problems. This is typically stronger in sixth-form lessons. However, there are too many examples where teachers miss the chance to pick up on pupils' misunderstanding.
- Pupils' books are free from graffiti but presentation varies between different subjects and teachers. In the best examples, handwriting is neat and extra sheets are pasted in securely. However, in a significant number of books, pupils have taken little pride in their work, corners are dog-eared, handwriting is careless and extra sheets are crumpled and falling out.
- Parents are positive about the quality of teaching in the college but there are a few who express dissatisfaction with the rates of progress their children are making.

Personal development and welfare

- The college's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement because they rely on teachers telling them what to do rather than seeking out learning experiences. For example, younger pupils told inspectors they sometimes avoid responding to teachers' questions, even though they know the answer.
- Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated and they trust staff to take action if they experience any unpleasantness. However, a few pupils told inspectors that name-calling can be a problem. Younger pupils explained that unpleasant things are sometimes said as a joke, but it can get out of hand.
- Pupils are encouraged to consider social and moral dilemmas but there are times when teachers' subject knowledge does not support anything more than a superficial discussion.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are warm. Pupils say they feel safe, and trust adults to take action if they have difficulties in or out of college. Staff make regular checks on pupils who are educated off site to make sure they are safe. Pupils are polite and friendly to each other and to adults.
- The college's work with pupils who are in most need is very strong because adults know pupils very well. They pay meticulous attention to detail in helping pupils overcome significant difficulties so that they can concentrate on their studies.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary between different classes. There are lessons where pupils are keen and enjoy their learning, but the picture is mixed. Typically, pupils do as they are asked and complete their work but without any sense of urgency or enjoyment, preferring instead to fiddle with pens or stare out of the window.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors reported that behaviour in lessons is generally calm and orderly. A minority of pupils distract others. When this happens, pupils are required to visit the first day response (FDR) room. Staff and pupils say that there has been a recent and marked improvement in behaviour. This is because of the implementation of a new behaviour policy with clear rewards and sanctions that are well understood and applied consistently. Consequently, the number of pupils who need to attend the FDR room is reducing.
- Disadvantaged pupils, girls and those with special educational needs feature more regularly as poor attenders than other groups. These gaps widened in 2015. Improvement has started to speed up this term but this is very recent and it is too soon to evaluate whether this going to be sustained. Leaders are encouraging better attendance by drawing pupils' and parents' attention to the consequences of poor attendance on academic progress. For example, they have created a 'team spirit' wall, which highlights the benefits of regular attendance.
- The numbers of pupils who were temporarily excluded rose last year and was above the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils generally arrive at school on time and move off to lessons promptly. Some pupils have a lackadaisical approach to wearing their uniform but respond to teachers' encouragement to smarten up.
- Pupils' behaviour, both positive and negative, is monitored assiduously. Any concerns raised by each head of house, are tackled quickly by the pastoral team. Leaders also work proactively with external agencies to make sure the right support goes to pupils in times of great need.
- Despite the strong day-to-day work of the pastoral teams to support improvement in pupils' behaviour, including those who are educated off site, there is no strategic oversight of this work by senior leaders. Consequently, it is hard for governors to check for any impact over time on pupils' attendance, rates of temporary exclusion from lessons or narrowing gaps between the most vulnerable pupils and others.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils underachieve at the college. The number of pupils achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, fell far short of the national average in 2014. There was some improvement last year but less than half of Year 11 pupils achieved this critical standard. From their broadly average starting points, this represents inadequate progress.
- Pupils' achievements at GCSE were considerably adrift from the college's predictions, further confirming deep-rooted inaccuracies in teachers' and leaders' checks on pupils' progress.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs lags behind that of other pupils. This is particularly stark in the progress disadvantaged pupils made last year in English and mathematics, when only around a third made expected progress. The college's assessment information suggests that disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, but these internal checks are not reliable and so the current state of play is unclear.
- Although pupils' progress this term is improving more rapidly in Key Stage 3, variation in the quality of teaching has resulted in the underachievement of pupils over time. The most- and least-able pupils do not make enough progress in many subjects, especially English and mathematics. A significant factor in their underachievement is teachers' failure to use information they hold about pupils' current abilities to plan appropriately challenging work. Pupils' progress in science has typically been a strength, but results for Year 11 pupils last year were disappointing.
- Pupils' reading skills have improved, and younger pupils talk enthusiastically about the books they are reading. They enjoy completing their reading logs and say they are expected to read at home as well as in college. The college has used the Year 7 catch-up funding and pupil premium funding effectively to support pupils' reading skills, and the college's information points to improvements in reading ages.
- Pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped because teachers in a range of subjects do not give them enough opportunities to write at length and develop their own style in Key Stage 3.
- There are too few pupils attending alternative provision to make meaningful comparisons.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement because systems for tracking pupils' progress have not had enough impact. Leaders monitor pupils' progress but they do not use this information effectively to identify when individuals and groups of pupils need extra help to catch up.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching but, as in the main school, they have not used this information effectively to iron out inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Outcomes for vocational courses are stronger than those for academic courses. Pupils who study vocational courses make better progress. Attainment and progress of pupils on academic courses improved in 2015, but have been below national averages over the past two years.
- The majority of pupils who started courses in Year 12 and Year 13 completed them in 2015. The numbers in Year 12 staying on for Year 13 is also positive, pointing to effective guidance at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils are well supported by the careers guidance in the sixth form. Pupils appreciate the wide range of activities that enrich the study programmes. This has included visits to universities, work experience and opportunities for voluntary work in the local community.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their life. Information provided by leaders suggests that the majority of pupils who left the college in 2015 went on to appropriate courses or work. The programme provided for those pupils who enter the sixth form without good grades in GCSE in English and mathematics is helping them to improve their skills.
- Teaching in the sixth form is stronger than in the main school because teachers tend to ask more probing questions. There is less variability in the quality of teaching across different subjects but it is still inconsistent. Teachers do not always use assessment information to provide pupils with work pitched at the right level.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they enjoy the small class sizes. Their relationships with each other and with staff are positive and they attend well. Pupils who spoke with inspectors say they feel safe and well supported at the college.

School details

Unique reference number	108647
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10000492

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary (non-selective)
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	542
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Short
Principal	Steve Campbell
Telephone number	0191 236 1700
Website	www.seatonburn.org.uk
Email address	seatonburncommunity.college@northtyneside.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2012

Information about this school

- The acting Principal has been in post since the beginning of September 2015. The substantive Principal resigned at the end of September. A Principal from an outstanding local school has recently agreed to support the school.
- This support from John Spence Community High School, a local and outstanding school, was brokered by the local authority.
- The college is smaller than an average-sized secondary school.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is a little higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language is very low.
- The college uses alternative provision for a very few pupils at Moorbridge, a pupil referral unit, and Personal Achievement Through Learning Support (PALS), located at Churchill Community College.
- The college meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The college offers a shared sixth-form provision with two local schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. A small number of lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed how pupils behaved in and out of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting Principal, and with the Principal from a local outstanding school, who is offering leadership support. Two inspectors met with members of the governing body, including its Chair. Inspectors also met with senior and middle leaders and representatives from the local authority. A meeting was held with a group of staff including teachers new to the profession. Informal discussions also took place with staff and pupils around the college.
- More formal discussions were held with two groups of pupils across the college about their educational experience and behaviour. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised, including in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the college's view of how well it is doing, development planning, the monitoring of teaching, performance management, staff training and records of governing body meetings. They also looked at records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. A range of information was downloaded from the college website.
- Inspectors took account of 57 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also scrutinised the 18 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

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