Walbottle Campus Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number	108524
LEA	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	277996
Inspection dates	19 January 2006 to 20 January 2006
Reporting inspector	Mr Joe Clark

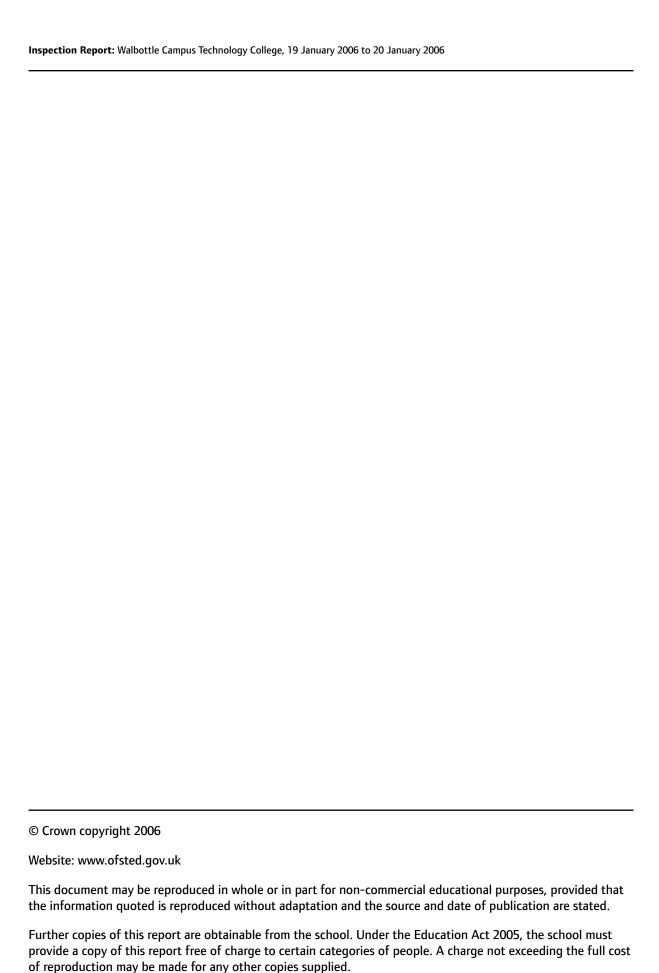This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	**School address**	Hexham Road
School category	Community		Walbottle
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	**Telephone number**	0191 2678221
Number on roll	1865	**Fax number**	0191 2646025
Appropriate authority	The governing body	**Chair of governors**	Mr Jeremy Paterson
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2000	**Headteacher**	Mr Michael Booth

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Walbottle Campus Technology College is situated on a large site outside the village of Throckley to the west of Newcastle upon Tyne. Year 7 pupils are housed on a separate site three miles away. In 2005 the school was re-designated from a 13-18 high school to an 11-18 comprehensive school. It is a much larger school than average. Out of the 1,869 pupils on roll, over 200 are in the sixth form. Attainment on entry is below average. The school draws its pupils mainly from areas of high social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average as is the proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or pupils whose first language is not English. The school has a Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards pupils achieve at the end of Year 11.

The school does not provide an acceptable standard of education. Although current pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making satisfactory progress, examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 have not been good enough and progress between Years 9 and 11 has been inadequate. The school does not provide satisfactory value for money. In Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is improving and is satisfactory overall. The curriculum adequately meets the needs of learners. Technology College status has had a positive influence on curriculum development, and strengthened links with the local community, but it has not yet resulted in higher standards.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their personal development. Attendance, though still below the national average, has improved significantly in the last twelve months. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory. The school provides a safe and caring environment for pupils. Communication with parents and links with other schools and institutions are good.

The headteacher and relatively new leadership team have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They judge the school's effectiveness to be satisfactory. Inspectors disagree because of the legacy of underachievement in Key Stage 4. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good except in the crucial area of improving standards in Year11. However, current Year 11 pupils are on course to achieve better results than in previous years and the potential for further school improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges the effectiveness of the sixth form to be good, but inspectors found it to be satisfactory. Results for both AS and A2 examinations were below average in 2004, although those for vocational courses were above the national level. In 2005, results for A2 improved, whilst vocational course results were sustained. The vast majority of students successfully complete their courses. Overall, while standards are lower than average, achievement is satisfactory given students' attainment when they enter the sixth form. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Personal development is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. They enjoy being in the sixth form, are well guided and cared for, and feel their views are taken into account. Effective management of the sixth form has resulted in a vigorous tutorial programme and a closer monitoring of students' progress towards their targets. Students are able to choose from a reasonable range of courses, including vocational

qualifications. Plans are well advanced to improve this provision. The sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

The most significant improvements the school needs to make to raise standards are:

- in order to raise standards in Key Stage 4, particularly for boys, improve the overall quality of teaching by sharing among all teachers the good teaching and learning practice that exists in the best lessons

- raise standards in mathematics by strengthening the leadership of the subject and eliminating the number of inadequate lessons taught.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. The school has evidence from a wide range of sources to indicate that overall, pupils enter the school with below average standards. Results in national tests taken by pupils in Year 9 indicate that they make satisfactory progress overall but standards remain below average. Pupils make good progress in English, satisfactory progress in science but inadequate progress in mathematics. Girls do better than boys. Targets have been met in English and science but not in mathematics.

In Years 10 and 11 pupils do not realise their potential. GCSE and other examination results have not kept up with the national trend of improvement and are well below average. Mathematics continues to perform poorly. Girls continue to do better than boys. In 2005, the school failed to meet the school and specialist college targets set for pupils aged 16.

The progress of pupils in the current Year 11 is satisfactory. Evidence from GCSE coursework assessments, early entry results, target reviews and a scrutiny of the work done so far, indicates that current progress is satisfactory.

Given standards on entry, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. Most students reach their target grade. Results in 2004 were well below average but improved in 2005.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because their needs are well identified and they receive effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy the caring and supportive environment the school provides. The 'BLUEHW' behaviour

policy has been effective in reducing low level disruption in lessons, to the benefit of the majority of pupils who adhere to the code of conduct. Attendance has improved dramatically in the past twelve months and the school has exceeded the attendance targets set by the DfES; attendance is now above the average for secondary schools in the local authority. However, attendance figures remain below the national average. Moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Spiritual awareness, while satisfactory overall, could be further enhanced by providing pupils with more frequent opportunities for reflection, for example, during assemblies. The merits of regular exercise, healthy eating, avoidance of substance abuse and issues of sexual health, are all effectively covered by a strong personal and social education programme. There is strong support for House charities and local community fund-raising events, and over 50 pupils are involved in the 'OWNIT' work placement scheme. The developing vocational curriculum, work experience and enterprise days all help develop pupils' awareness of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It has improved considerably in the last year and is now having a positive impact on pupils' progress. The school has identified where learning needs to be improved and is using a range of strategies to develop teaching; these are already making a difference. In the better lessons teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, share plans with pupils and use a variety of teaching methods. Pupils respond to these lessons by working hard. In a minority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow, there is a lack of variety and energy and this results in disinterested pupils. The school is starting to make systematic use of a wide range of information to monitor progress and set targets for improvement. Where assessment is used effectively, as in science, standards have risen. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn satisfactorily because teachers target their needs and pupils receive effective support from teaching assistants

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In Years 7 to 9, pupils take all the appropriate National Curriculum subjects with additional emphasis on literacy and design and technology. Current Year 11 pupils are the first to benefit from the curriculum changes brought in two years ago to meet the needs of all groups of pupils through an extension of vocational and practical courses. In keeping with the school's Technology College status, all pupils study at least one design and technology course and good curriculum links have been developed with local business organisations. Pupils are well prepared for future employment or further education through effective work experience and careers advice. The programme for pupils' personal development includes effective health, safety and citizenship education. A good range of extracurricular activities is well supported and enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a safe and secure environment and works hard to ensure that the needs of its most vulnerable pupils are met. Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements and teachers have been effectively trained. All pupils are carefully monitored and supported. Vulnerable pupils have special work bases to ensure their progress is maintained. Guidance on options and careers helps pupils to make well-informed decisions about their futures. Although there is a rigorous system of assessing pupils' work and setting targets, not all pupils fully understand the system or what they need to do in order to improve. Communications with parents have improved since the last inspection. Parents are now clear about the expectations the school has and this is an important part of the school's drive to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders have recognised that there is underachievement in the school and are taking strong action to address this. Close monitoring of the work of departments, improvements to the curriculum and better tracking are all beginning to quicken pupils' rates of progress. However these measures have not been in place long enough and are not sufficiently embedded in the work of the school to have yet improved students' results in national tests and GCSE examinations. During the inspection, inspectors and senior managers observed several lessons together and confirmed that the school's view of the quality of teaching is accurate and monitoring is rigorous.

The vast majority of issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully, including better provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, there is still underachievement at the end of Key Stage 4. Consequently, the school does not give value for money. In the last two years school leadership, strengthened by the recent appointment of four senior managers and eleven new subject leaders, has successfully overseen a period of school reorganisation and staffing turbulence. It has a clear view of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. Governors provide strong support. The school now has the capacity to improve further. Financial management is secure. Accommodation is set to be transformed when a new school is built in about three years' time. The school has good links with other providers and external agencies which further enhance the range of opportunities for its pupils. Links with parents are good. From a very high return, comments on the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the headteacher and the school.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19

Overall effectiveness

	School Overall	16-19
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

	School Overall	16-19
How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards[1] reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

	School Overall	16-19
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

	School Overall	16-19
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

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[1] Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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21 January 2006

Dear Pupils and Students

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school recently. Below is a summary of what we found.

Based on how well you were doing when you left your Primary or Middle school, you should be doing much better in your GCSE and other examinations. You do quite well in Year 9 and the sixth form so there is no reason why both boys and girls, but particularly boys, cannot do as well in Years 10 and 11.

Your teachers are working hard at improving the quality of lessons and this is paying off in your making faster progress. Of course, if you are one of the pupils with poor attendance your learning is bound to suffer. School attendance improved remarkably last year and is not far off the national average.

Despite the tremendous upheaval of the last few years, you still like school and enjoy being here. You feel safe and well cared for. We found Year 7 pupils to be very proud of "their" lower school and the vast number of responsibility badges worn on jumpers is a testament to their growing maturity.

Your parents and carers have great confidence in the school and fully support what your headteacher and others are trying to achieve for you. They are aware that Year 11 results must improve before the next inspection in twelve months time. You can do your bit by attending regularly and doing your best.

Thank you once again for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Joe Clark

Lead inspector