



Seaham School of Technology

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114286
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279353
Inspection dates 31 January 2006 to 1 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Mary Sewell

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Burnhall Drive
School category	Community		Seaham
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		County Durham, SR7 0EN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5161600
Number on roll	1105	Fax number	0191 516138
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Pauline Ramshaw
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr David Shield

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	31 January 2006 - 1 February 2006	279353

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average comprehensive school, in an area of extreme social deprivation with more pupils than average taking free school meals. The number of pupils needing additional help with learning and/or other disabilities is also above average. There are only a small number of pupils in the care of the local authority or who have English as an additional language. Pupils start school with standards which are broadly average. The school has Specialist School Status for Technology and has a Healthy Schools Award and Sportsmark Status. The school is well supported by the Excellence Cluster and Leadership Incentive Grant.

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 circumstances, it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and progress, attendance, teaching and the effectiveness of subject leaders.

The school views its overall effectiveness as satisfactory but inspectors judge it to be inadequate. Seaham School of Technology has declined in effectiveness in recent years and has not met all the recommendations of the last inspection. At present it does not provide an adequate education for all its pupils.

Standards of attainment are below average in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 and in many general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. Standards in vocational subjects are much higher. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory at both key stages as they fail to make expected progress. The new senior leaders have recently introduced well conceived strategies to raise attainment.

Although most pupils attend school and behave well, a small minority do not attend regularly and are responsible for poor behaviour. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Too many pupils are taking days away from school and this is affecting their examination results as they fail to do as well as is expected of them.

The school promotes pupils' personal development with good guidance and support for vulnerable pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school has sensibly introduced a number of initiatives to make it more suitable to the full range of pupils; however there is too much variation in the quality of teaching to ensure its effective delivery.

The new leadership team has set appropriate priorities for improvement and introduced rigorous systems for monitoring staff performance and for measuring pupils' progress. Systems to support teaching have already led to some better teaching, but these reforms are at an early stage and significant improvements in the outcomes for students have yet to be made. The school is financially handicapped by the constant need to repair poor accommodation, parts of which are unsuitable for teaching. The value for money provided by the school is therefore currently unsatisfactory but its overall capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and English, mathematics, science, design and technology and business studies at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the proportion of good or better lessons by improving planning, and raising expectations and challenge to meet the needs of individual pupils.

- Improve attendance by applying a consistent approach to checking the numbers of pupils present in each lesson and following this up.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in underperforming subjects by more rigorous checks on teaching and learning by subject leaders.
- Improve the accommodation so that it provides a healthy, safe and positive learning environment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate overall for all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with broadly average attainment in English, mathematics and science. They do not make enough progress in these subjects over five years. This is clearly demonstrated by the well below average GCSE results. National test results in Year 9 in the core subjects have improved steadily but they are still below average overall. Results in English are better than in mathematics and science.

Overall GCSE results have improved steadily. The results show that all groups of pupils' performance in a combination of traditional GCSE subjects and vocational courses produce the expected level of attainment. However, this masks the fact that they do well in the vocational subjects and underachieve in English, mathematics, science and other subjects such as design and technology and business education. The school has data to suggest that results will improve again in 2006; however, much better performances in English, mathematics and science would be required if achievement were to be considered to be satisfactory overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school judges its pupils' personal development and well-being as good; however, inspection evidence indicates that this is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils behave well, are willing to learn, and enthuse about those subjects which they find enjoyable. A small minority of pupils are less well-behaved, and last year, a substantial number of days were lost due to pupils being sent home because of misbehaviour. Attendance is unsatisfactory and is a barrier to raising achievement. The school is working hard to improve the situation, though it is too early yet to judge the full effectiveness of measures taken.

Pupils take advantage of the good opportunities to assume responsibility; for example, as school council representatives, librarians and peer mentors, and are involved in community projects. Pupils generally work well with each other and with their teachers. They know to whom they would turn for help and they feel safe; as bullying is dealt with effectively. They are well prepared for work related learning but weak literacy and numeracy skills hinder achievement. Pupils drink and eat healthily, and get ample exercise in physical activities both in and outside of lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Overall teaching and learning are inadequate. Pupils do not make enough progress in key subjects as there is still inadequate teaching, although half the lessons seen by inspectors were judged to be good. These lessons were characterised by pace and challenge, with varied and engaging activities matched to pupils' capabilities. However, less effective lessons lack urgency, with laborious teacher explanations and little acknowledgement of pupils' differing needs. In such situations a few pupils quickly lost interest and misbehaviour began to impede progress. Inconsistencies in target-setting and marking mean that not all pupils know how well they are doing in relation to national standards.

Improving teaching and learning is prioritised in planning at all levels. Close monitoring has made senior leaders aware of variations in the quality of teaching and of the need to achieve consistency of performance. The work of advanced skills' teachers in coaching and sharing good practice, together with opportunities for collaborative planning and peer lesson observation are bringing improvement, though not yet in all areas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in meeting the needs of most pupils. The school is entering Year 8 pupils early for national tests as a move to raising challenge and aspirations. Specialist status has improved the provision of more relevant courses in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) which has raised standards in vocational subjects. Information and communication technology is provided for all pupils to GCSE. Preparation for employment is helped by a well planned programme of careers education and work experience. The school has recognised the need to further extend vocational courses, and has re-established links with the local college to enable an even broader range of options.

The programme for pupils' personal development includes effective health and safety education, but the citizenship provision is not sufficiently developed, and fails to give pupils a broader view of their role in society. A good range of extra-curricular activities are well supported and enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school evaluated its care and guidance as good, but the inspection team finds it satisfactory. Child protection procedures are effective and arrangements for looked-after and vulnerable children are good, due to the close links with external child support agencies. The school, despite limited resources for classroom support,

cares well for all pupils who require special support for learning or other disabilities. Procedures for assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are satisfactory. The majority of pupils understand their targets and what they need to do in order to improve. Parents and pupils benefit from discussions with staff on raising achievement day.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. Although generally pleased, some parents expressed misgivings about behaviour and pupils' safety. Although the school has a detailed health and safety policy, inspectors had serious concerns about the state of the accommodation, sanitation and infestation.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate overall. This is because the quality of the subject managers is variable. They do not all monitor the work of their departments effectively enough.

The recently appointed headteacher and his senior team lead the school well. They have improved the quality of self-evaluation and correctly identified the priorities for development. During the inspection, inspectors and senior managers observed several lessons together and confirmed the school's view of the quality of teaching is accurate. Ineffective teaching has been well supported, but these measures have not been in place long enough, and are not sufficiently embedded in all subjects to improve standards in national tests and GCSE results.

There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Standards in literacy and numeracy have not risen significantly. The higher attaining pupils are still not achieving the highest grades at GCSE. Assessment data is now used to set targets effectively in the majority of subjects. The school action plan is relevant, detailed and closely monitored. The curriculum has been extended to provide more vocational subjects. These are popular and successful with boys and girls of all abilities.

Governance has been inadequate but governors are now providing challenge and support to the leadership team, especially with the plans to rebuild the school although the current state of the accommodation raises serious concerns. The school's financial position had deteriorated in recent years but the new leadership has eliminated the budget deficit. The school has good links with other providers and external agencies and has benefited financially from some of these initiatives. However, there remains a heavy demand on the school's budget because the accommodation is in a very unsatisfactory state of repair. Many areas of the building are unfit to be used for teaching and some areas of the school pose health risks. These health risks have been raised with the headteacher. The school currently gives unsatisfactory value for money because of the low levels of achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11.

The new leadership team demonstrates good capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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	No
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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2 February 2006

Dear Pupils,

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school, especially those of you who took time to speak to us. This is what we found.

Based on how well you were doing when you left primary school, some of you should be doing much better in your national tests at the end of Years 9 and 11. Your school is now doing much more to ensure you achieve well in these tests. It is up to you to take advantage of the extra help offered.

In many lessons you learn a lot but in others you learn very little. Sometimes this is because you don't try hard enough or a minority misbehave and don't let the teacher get on with the lesson. A number of you also allow your learning to suffer because you do not attend regularly enough.

For the majority of pupils, your behaviour and attitudes to school are satisfactory. You say you enjoy the vocational subjects and do well in these.

Your teachers are always available to help you with any problems you may have. We know you are concerned about the poor state of the buildings, and this is also a concern of ours, but some of you could take more care with litter.

Your new headteacher has already made improvements, particularly in the way you understand your targets. There now needs to be greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning so that from now on you achieve higher standards and better results. We wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Sewell (Lead Inspector).