



Fyndoune Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114289
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279355
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Heather Richardson

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Findon Hill
School category	Community		Sacrison
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Durham DH7 6LU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 3710277
Number on roll	445	Fax number	0191 3712269
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Jack Hardiman
Date of previous inspection	1 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr Peter Sykes

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	Inspection number 279355
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Fyndoune Community College has just over four hundred students, which makes it a small comprehensive school. It serves a close-knit, semi-rural community in which there are high levels of deprivation but a firm commitment to education. The proportion of students who are eligible for a free school meal is much higher than average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very few students are from a minority ethnic heritage. The college works in close collaboration with partners, including local colleges, to provide a range of courses for students. Arrangements for a formal federation with one of these colleges are at a final stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Fyndoune Community College is an improving college which is valued by its community. It is not yet achieving all that it could for its students, but it is moving in the right direction and standards are rising. The small size of the college fosters a strong sense of belonging and students benefit from being well-known by all staff. The care and support provided by the college are strengths, as is the clear determination of its leaders to improve further. This is illustrated in the partnerships with local colleges which have already resulted in wider curriculum choices and improving standards for students. The college's capacity for improvement has increased significantly through the work of the joint leadership team of Fyndoune and its federation partner college.

As the college recognises, the quality of its work is not yet consistent. Although students make satisfactory progress overall, it is variable and the standards they achieve, notably in science at Key Stage 3, are not yet high enough. Teaching is increasingly effective, but students are not always provided with clear guidance on how to improve. The college is monitoring its work and the progress which students make, but some of its monitoring systems are relatively new and not yet sufficiently rigorous. Nevertheless, the college's self-evaluation for this inspection was broadly accurate. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise overall standards, and especially standards in science at KS3.
- Improve the quality of feedback to students and the use of assessment to monitor their progress.
- Monitor the work of the college rigorously and use the information gained to promote greater consistency.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of students at Fyndoune is satisfactory overall in comparison with similar schools nationally. However, the progress they make varies between different key stages, subjects and groups of students. When students join the college, their attainment is broadly average. They make insufficient progress in science at Key Stage 3, but most make adequate overall progress in English and mathematics. Standards in English and mathematics in 2005 were broadly average. However, low standards in science mean that overall standards at Key Stage 3 are below the national average, although in line with similar schools. The percentage of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE improved markedly in 2005 and exceeded the college's targets, but remained below the national average. These results were adversely affected by the relatively high proportion of the small year group who both left and joined the college after Year 7, as its records show. Standards at Key Stage 4 are comparable with those in similar schools.

Girls' achievement is better than that of boys, especially in English at Key Stage 3, although some do not achieve as well at Key Stage 4. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make good progress because their learning needs are well understood. Some vulnerable students, particularly those with behavioural difficulties who join the college late, do not achieve well, but the college has improved the standards reached by students targeted for additional support. At Key Stage 4, students perform particularly well in information and communication technology (ICT), rural science and physical education, but less well in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

This is satisfactory overall. Most students like the college and behave well. The college, its students and parents agree that the behaviour of a small minority of students disrupts lessons on occasions, but students understand the new system to promote good behaviour. They also know that bullying is not acceptable, as well as how to seek help. Students' attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now close to the national average. Students enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility and to represent the college, for example through the college council and various enterprise activities. They know about staying safe and healthy eating, but do not always choose to eat healthily. However, the college council is eager to change this and increase the choices available at lunchtime. Many join in optional sports activities to keep fit and appreciate the increased amount of time for physical education.

Students' moral and social development is generally good. Some show this in the efforts made to raise funds to provide clean water in developing countries. Students show awareness of the breadth of cultural and ethnic traditions in the wider community, as well as contributing to their own community. Their spiritual development is less strong, as the college does not exploit fully the opportunities available, for example in tutor time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although satisfactory overall, there is some inconsistency in teaching and learning which results in variable progress for students. However, teaching is improving, particularly for students in Years 10 and 11, because of the ongoing training provided by the college. A significant proportion of teaching is now good. There is a small proportion of both outstanding and inadequate teaching.

In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and students enjoy the brisk pace of their learning. They also enjoy the opportunities they get to be actively engaged in learning tasks. In the weaker lessons, students are not challenged sufficiently and they show too little interest in their work. In a small number of lessons, there is low

level disruption which slows the progress of the whole class. However, students generally relate well to their teachers and to each other. The majority of lessons are well-planned with work matched to the needs of all students. The best lessons have a range of activities, to fit the range of students' learning styles, but in some lessons, students are too passive and their learning slows. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are especially well catered for. They are included in all activities and receive effective support.

Most students' work is marked, but the quality of comments to help students to improve is variable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, providing a broad and balanced experience for the majority of learners. There are some good features, including the new curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4 which are popular with students. Flexibility within these pathways is allowing most students, and especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to achieve higher standards and move into further education and employment. Students on the work-related pathway particularly enjoy the variety of practical learning opportunities that they experience and can recognise improvements in their behaviour, confidence and career prospects. The enhanced curriculum at Key Stage 4 results from close collaboration with partner colleges. Although there have been some positive outcomes, the curriculum improvements have not yet had time to raise markedly the overall standards. The college also has well-developed plans to modify its Key Stage 3 curriculum to more clearly match the needs of learners.

There is wide range of enrichment activities, particularly in sport, which students enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a strength. The college makes the most of its small size to provide good care, support and guidance for students. It has a strong commitment to inclusion and hence its care and support for vulnerable students is particularly good. The college has excellent links with a range of agencies to ensure that the needs of students are met. Child protection procedures are clear and well understood by staff and governors, all of whom have received recent training. Risk assessments are in place and the college is improving the way in which it monitors their quality and effectiveness. The college has placed emphasis on anti-bullying, and the 'Fyndoune Against Bullying - FAB' initiative has attracted the interest of national media. The college is also improving its behaviour code. Arrangements for students to transfer from primary schools are good, as are those to help students into higher education or the world of work. Careers education is good. The links with primary schools are particularly effective for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, these students transfer smoothly to Fyndoune and make good progress. The college is improving the way in which it tracks students' progress, but the system is not fully developed or used

consistently by all teachers. Learning mentors provide good support for students whose progress causes particular concern.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college's leadership is being re-energised through joint work with its partner college in the move towards federation. This collaboration has increased the capacity and developed the expertise of the senior leadership team to bring about improvement. There is a clear direction for the college and a sharp focus on raising standards. This follows an extended period of time when the capacity of the college's leadership was stretched and more limited progress was made. The acting headteacher has played a significant role in maintaining stability, promoting improvement and fostering the inclusive, caring ethos of the college throughout this time of change.

College leaders acknowledge that the standards are not yet sufficiently high, but they are taking appropriate actions to raise them, including establishing weekly training for all staff alongside regular monitoring. Some of the college's monitoring systems are at early stage of development and are not yet sufficiently rigorous to remove the inconsistencies in teaching and learning, but this is improving. Governors are contributing to the overall improvement through their increasingly well-informed challenge, as well as strong support for the college. They recognise the pivotal role which the college plays in the local community. The college consults well with students, parents and other partners to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	3	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	3	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?	3	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?	2	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	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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To the Students of

Fyndoune Community College

Findon Hill

Sacriston

Durham

DH7 6LU

3 March 2006

Dear Students

The members of the inspection team would like to thank you for the way you made us feel welcome when we inspected your college. We were pleased that so many of you, your parents and carers told us the things you like about college. In particular, you like the small size of the college because staff and students know each other well and this helps you to enjoy college and make progress. You also like the opportunities to help others through the college council, FAB and the various fundraising you do. We noted how many of you take part in the various activities the college organises, and wished we could have joined those of you who went to see England play at Anfield. You know about healthy eating, but told us that you still eat too many chips!

We think Fyndoune Community College is getting better, although there are still some things which need to be improved. The best lessons, and those you told us you enjoy most, are those which have a variety of activities, so you can learn in different ways. Older students told us how much they enjoy the choices they have to follow different courses, some at other colleges. We think these choices are good and are helping to raise standards. Working with the other colleges is helping Fyndoune College to improve in other ways as well, as teachers are sharing ideas. One of the best things about Fyndoune is the care and support you receive from teachers and other staff. This includes helping Year 7 students as they move from primary schools, as well as the guidance for older students on careers and further education. The college also is good at supporting those of you who need extra help with your learning.

We have asked your teachers to do some things to make Fyndoune better still.

The standards you reach in your work are improving, but could be even higher. We have asked your teachers to raise standards, especially in science at Key Stage 3.

We have also asked teachers to help you to know more clearly how to improve your work. In addition, we want the teachers to improve the way they check on how well the college is doing, to help it to improve overall.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Fyndoune Community College and that you are successful.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson HMI

(on behalf of the inspection team)