



# Woodham Community Technology College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114304  
**LEA** Durham  
**Inspection number** 279359  
**Inspection dates** 24 January 2006 to 25 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Ann Wallis

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Washington Crescent
<b>School category</b>	Community		Newton Aycliffe
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		County Durham, DL5 4AX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 300328
<b>Number on roll</b>	1186	<b>Fax number</b>	01325 301950
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Christine Robinson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Steve Harness

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 24 January 2006 - 25 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279359
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Woodham Community Technology College is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11-18. It has 1186 students of whom 103 are in the sixth form. It has been a specialist technology college since 1999 and is a resourced college for students with physical disabilities. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is average. The vast majority of students come from white British backgrounds and there are very few students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The college judges itself as providing a satisfactory education for students aged 11-16 and inspectors agree. Although results indicate that standards and achievement fell in 2005, inspection evidence shows that the achievement of all students is now satisfactory and standards have returned to their previously average levels. The college knows its strengths and weaknesses and leaders and managers have rightly identified the reasons for some students' underachievement in 2005 and have put in place suitable measures to help prevent this happening again. Recent improvements in the curriculum, in the tracking of students' progress and in systems for monitoring the work of subject departments are all leading to improvements in standards and achievement. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the college has the capacity to improve further, especially when these recent initiatives are fully embedded in their work. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and the college recognises the need to share good practice in order to improve the quality of teaching further.

The personal development of students and the care provided for them are satisfactory. Relationships are good and most students have satisfactory attitudes to learning although there are a minority of students who are not always considerate of others. Specialist status continues to have a positive impact on the curriculum. Links with outside agencies and with local businesses provide satisfactory support for the education and welfare of students.

The college provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 4**

Inspectors agree with the college's judgement that the effectiveness and efficiency of the small sixth form are inadequate. Standards are below average and achievement is inadequate. Although examination results improved in 2005 students are still making insufficient progress when compared to their starting points. The narrow range of courses offered is not well matched to the needs of the students. Class sizes are small and in spite of some innovative attempts to use video-conferencing to teach the smallest groups, value for money is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory because there is a clear long term vision to collaborate with other schools in order to better meet students' needs. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in some lessons where the curriculum is better suited to students' needs. Students appreciate the guidance and support they are given and their personal development is satisfactory.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards and achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of all students.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by sharing good practice.

- Ensure all students achieve their potential by intervening in their learning at an early stage in order to prevent underachievement.
- Ensure that new systems for setting students' targets, assessing their work and monitoring their progress are implemented consistently across the college.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

The college grades achievement and standards for students aged 11-16 as satisfactory and inspectors agree with this assessment. Students' attainment on entry to the college is average. In the 2005 national tests, Year 9 students made satisfactory progress to reach average standards. Targets were exceeded in mathematics and science but not met in English. When measured against their capabilities and starting points, students' overall achievement was satisfactory. Girls performed better than boys and results were better in mathematics and science than in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress in line with their peers.

Between 2002 and 2004 the proportion of students attaining the higher GCSE grades showed a rising trend to reach average standards in 2004. Overall standards were average in 2004 and students' achievement was satisfactory. However, GCSE results dipped in 2005 and were below national averages. This underachievement was largely attributable to a significant minority of students, mainly boys, who failed to respond to numerous intervention strategies and did not engage in their education. Consequently they did not reach their targets and underachieved.

Current standards and achievement in the college are satisfactory. Detailed analysis of modular examination results, current assessments and students' work indicates that they are making satisfactory progress towards reaching their targets.

In the sixth form, results improved in 2005 but were still below average. Students made inadequate progress, principally because the curriculum was not well matched to their needs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 3**

The college assesses students' personal development as good but inspectors grade it as satisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form. The majority of students are committed to learning and enjoy college activities. Their behaviour is satisfactory, although there is a minority of students who are not always considerate of others. The college has made successful efforts to improve attendance and figures are now close to the national average. Relationships between teachers and students are good, particularly in the sixth form. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) and assemblies is satisfactory. Topic work focusing on, for example, the misuse of

drugs encourages students to adopt safe practices. Students enjoy the opportunities they are given to voice their opinions through the college council.

Students take part in a range of enrichment activities, particularly in sport, drama and music which promote healthy living and add to their enjoyment of college. Their participation in charity work encourages wider community awareness. Work-related activities and careers advice ensure students are prepared for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the college that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in both the main school and the sixth form. The quality of teaching ranges from inadequate to outstanding. Inspectors saw a considerable number of good lessons. In good lessons, the pace is brisk and teachers have high expectations of their students so they achieve well. In weaker lessons students are not challenged sufficiently, they show too little interest in their work and consequently make slower progress. Students relate well to their teachers and to each other. Most students are keen to learn but in some lessons there is some low level disruption which affects their learning. Improvements in the way teaching groups are organised through the 'pathways' system help teachers match work to the needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties.

Most students' work is marked regularly and informative comments help them to improve. New initiatives for setting targets and monitoring students' progress through the 'rising stars' review system are helping to ensure that all students reach their potential. However, not all students know how to reach their targets in all subjects. This is because lesson content, teaching methods and assessment procedures are not linked firmly enough.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Students' progress is hampered because the curriculum does not fully meet their needs.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

The college offers a satisfactory curriculum for students aged 11-16 with some good features. It provides a broad and balanced experience for the majority of learners. Recent curriculum improvements have not yet had sufficient time to impact on students' standards but the new 'pathway' groupings are already proving popular with students and parents. Flexibility within these pathways allows most students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, to achieve their potential. There is satisfactory provision for the development of students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Increased numbers of vocational courses are now offered which are responding to local needs, providing the students with good work related skills and enhancing links with local businesses. Many students participate in a wide range of enrichment activities. The national success of the American football team and the increase in musical activities are notable features. Specialist technology college status continues to have a positive impact on the curriculum.

In the sixth form the curriculum is inadequate because it is too narrow to meet the needs of all students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The college provides satisfactory care, guidance and support to its students. Teachers know their students well. Students at risk of exclusion or underachievement are being identified earlier and students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported. Proper attention is paid to child protection and health and safety procedures. Most students say they feel safe and can turn to an adult in confidence if they need help and support. Parents say they are satisfied with the care their children receive. Year 7 students particularly appreciate the help they are given to enable them to settle quickly into the college. Effective careers guidance is given to Year 11 and sixth form students when they go on to employment or further education.

Tutors are now tracking students' progress satisfactorily. However, information on grades and progress against targets is not yet sufficiently consistent across all subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the college's own view that leadership and management, including that of the sixth form, are satisfactory. Managers at all levels have a shared understanding of what needs to be done to in order to move the college forward. The vision driving this is clearly and effectively articulated by the headteacher, echoing the college motto "achievement for all" which is concerned with the personal as well as academic development of all students. The senior leadership team have a good understanding of their roles and are successful in translating this into action. Monitoring procedures are effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching but have not yet led to significant improvements in the overall quality. The curriculum has recently improved. This, together with the introduction of more robust means of supporting middle managers and making them more accountable, is beginning to have a positive effect on students' achievement. However, these have not yet been in place long enough to be seen in improved examination and test results. Nevertheless, the college has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Governors support the college well. They understand the college's major strengths and recognise where it needs to improve. However, statutory requirements are not fully in place in the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students. Accommodation is adequate overall though requiring improvement in physical education. The college has worked hard, and with

some success, to reduce the need to employ teachers lacking specialist qualifications in several curriculum areas.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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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24 January 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for the welcome you gave to inspectors and for the valuable contribution you made to the inspection. We were impressed with the sensible way you talk about your school and voice your opinions. I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know what we have said about your school in our report.

Below is a summary of what we found:

based on how well you were doing when you left primary school and on your potential, your school makes sure that your achievement is satisfactory by the time you reach the end of Year 11

teaching in most of your lessons is satisfactory and sometimes it is good

many of you say that you enjoy school and feel that it is a safe place to be

your behaviour is satisfactory and most of you want to learn

teachers help your personal development and you appreciate the care, guidance and support they give you

whilst some students are successful in the sixth form, the curriculum is too narrow for all of you to achieve your potential.

This is what we have asked the school to do now:

increase the amount of good teaching in your lessons

track your progress carefully to make sure that you all reach your targets and achieve your potential

ensure that the sixth form curriculum meets the needs of all students.

Yours sincerely

A Wallis  
(Lead inspector)