



Ponteland Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122358
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281242
Inspection dates 12 January 2006 to 13 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Peter Harris

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Callerton Lane
School category	Community		Ponteland
Age range of pupils	13 to 19		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01661 824711
Number on roll	1188	Fax number	01661 821831
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Robin Ramsey
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Stephen J Prandle

Age group 13 to 19	Inspection dates 12 January 2006 - 13 January 2006	Inspection number 281242
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Ponteland Community High School is a 13-18 mixed high school. It is bigger than most schools with 1205 students on roll; the sixth form is large with 395 students. In 1995, it was designated a specialist language college. Compared with the national average, the percentage of students eligible for free school meals is very low, and the percentage of students with statements of special educational needs and with additional learning needs is very low. The percentage of students of minority ethnic origin is lower than the national average and the proportion of students whose first language is not English is very low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ponteland High School is a good school. The school's view of its overall effectiveness is that it is good and the inspectors agree with this evaluation. The school delivers good value for money. The strengths of the school include the development of workplace skills and the contribution the school makes to ensure students' economic well-being. Students achieve high standards and make good progress. Teaching is well organised and students are well behaved. The main areas for the school to improve are in the overall achievement of boys. They are not underachieving but overall the school adds more value to the previous achievements of girls. The school also needs to consult and communicate more effectively with parents, and to broaden the courses available to lower attaining students in Key Stage 4.

Although the school has still to provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form, in other respects the issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively. There are rigorous systems to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning and standards have risen. The school has good capacity to improve further.

The school's self-evaluation is effective. It has identified the areas where it needs to improve. However, the process of self-evaluation does not adequately seek the views of others on the quality and effectiveness of its work, especially gathering the views of parents and carers.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school evaluated its sixth form provision as good and the inspectors agree. The sixth form is popular and well established. The numbers of students who stay on to study in the sixth form are high and the numbers who begin their studies in Year 12 and continue them as expected into Year 13 are good. The range of courses offered is wide and improving. Sensible but not over ambitious entry requirements ensure that students enrol on courses which are appropriate to their needs. This adds to their likelihood of success. A and AS level results are above the national average and a good proportion of students attain the higher grades A and B. Most students achieve the grades predicted from their GCSE results and many exceed them. Leadership and management are good in the sixth form. Teaching is good overall. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress is good. Students receive good quality advice and guidance. Personal development and well-being are strong, especially with respect to students' behaviour and attitudes to their work, which are very positive. The contribution that students make to the rest of the school is strong, particularly as prefects and as well trained "peer educators". The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

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

- Narrow the gap between the value the school adds to the achievement of boys compared with girls
- Consult systematically with parents to ensure that they are more involved in the school's development and improvement
- Broaden the curriculum to include more courses which will benefit lower attaining students in Key Stage 4

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school evaluates achievement and standards as good and the inspectors agree. The attainment on entry to the school is well above average. This is recognised by the school and they work to build on students' previous achievement. Students, particularly girls, make good progress.

The standards reached in Key Stage 3 are well above the national average for students who achieve Level 5 and level 6. Students also reach or exceed the national average at Level 7 but the school recognises it should increase the percentage achieving the highest level in English. The results in 2005 represent an improvement on those of 2004. Performance as measured by the average points score for students has been significantly above average in all subjects for the past five years.

Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. The school has successfully added value to their prior attainment to a degree that is significantly higher than average and notably so in science in 2005. Overall, the progress made by girls is well above average; although boys are not underachieving they are not doing as well as they could.

The standards reached by students in Key Stage 4 at GCSE also show that the school has added value in 2005 to students' achievement compared to their prior attainment, and this was also the case in 2004. The percentage of students achieving five higher grades at GCSE is well above the national average and rose in 2005; the percentage achieving the higher grades in both English and mathematics has risen from 2004 and remains well above the national figure. The percentage of students gaining five or more grades is above average. Boys' achievement is as expected, they are not underachieving but they are not adding value to the same degree as girls.

The school has tackled the issue of boys' achievement since the last inspection and has had success in narrowing the gap. However, issues remain and the school has some useful strategies to tackle these further.

There are strong performances in several subjects, including in the percentage of higher grades in English language and literature and mathematics at GCSE. In the few subjects where students perform relatively less well the school has rigorous monitoring systems to bring about improvement.

There is no significant underachievement by particular groups of learners, students with additional learning difficulties make good progress, and all achieved at least one GCSE grade in all of English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school evaluates personal development and well being as outstanding. The inspectors judge it to be good. Students behave well, are positive about learning and enjoy school. They participate in many activities outside the school day. Attendance is just above average, unauthorised absence is significantly lower than average, and there are few exclusions.

Relationships between staff and students are good; respect is shown to each other. Students feel safe in school and know how to seek support. There are few incidences of bullying and these are dealt with effectively by the school. A particular strength is the peer mentoring system where trained sixth form students support others.

The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The "thought for the week" approach is imaginative but is not consistently followed by all teachers. Learners are well prepared for the challenges that face them by the teaching and learning in which religious education, citizenship and personal, social and health education are grouped together. Many students make a strong contribution to the community, including through concerts and charity work.

Careers guidance and work experience help students prepare well for the world of work. The school has recently had its work in promoting a healthy school recognised with an award. There remains scope to increase the availability of water, and healthy options at lunchtime. The police make a worthwhile contribution to the school's drugs education programme but this is insufficiently supported by school-based initiatives. The sex and relationships education programme is good and peer mentors augment the work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges the quality of its teaching and learning to be good and inspection evidence confirms this evaluation. No teaching was seen that was less than satisfactory and much of it was good. Notable strengths in the teaching included teachers' good command of their subjects and lessons that were carefully planned and structured. Teachers use the good and often excellent attitudes students bring to their learning to establish positive and productive relationships which further encourage and motivate students to learn. Good use is made of information technology in presenting lessons. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is because the methods and the tasks interest students less, and sometimes because teachers tend to talk at the class too much. Assessment of students' work is a growing strength. Teachers' assessment and students' own self-assessment are helping students to improve the standards of their work. Marking is regular and helpful. Students are aware of their targets and what they have to do to achieve the highest possible grade. Students with learning

difficulties and those with disabilities learn well because their needs are well known to their teachers and they receive effective support from teaching assistants. Teaching in the sixth form is also good. Students value their lessons and benefit from teachers' expertise, both in their subjects, and in the methods they use to help them learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of most students well. Enterprise education is an outstanding feature. Students throughout the school have regular opportunities to develop the essential skills of problem solving, working in teams, being innovative and showing initiative. Provision is effectively linked to classroom practice. It encourages thinking skills in all subjects as well as providing work-related learning opportunities, and there is an emerging vocational curriculum. A good range of academic courses is offered in Years 10 to 13, including compulsory language courses for all students in Years 9 to 12. The college has exceeded its target for the number of students studying a second language. However, the school does not provide a broad enough range of suitable courses to meet the needs of the lowest attaining students in Years 10 and 11, particularly courses which could lead on to sixth form study. Out of lesson times, the school provides a good range of well attended activities, particularly in sports and music, but also in coursework support sessions. Statutory requirements to provide religious education in the sixth form are not met.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school evaluates care, guidance and support as good; inspectors also judge it to be good. There are good arrangements to support transition from the feeder schools into Year 9, comprehensive information and support when making choices for Key Stage 4, and into the sixth form. The school has systems to keep parents informed of their children's progress. Nevertheless, a significant minority of parents who responded to the inspection would welcome earlier information on their children's progress once they have joined the school and that information about their children's targets could be communicated more efficiently in writing only. They would also welcome greater privacy at parents' evenings.

Child protection procedures comply with statutory requirements and are well supported by the school's Child Protection Officers, and other trained staff. The school has a safe working environment and equipment is in good repair. The school works effectively with a range of agencies. Students are aware of how they are achieving, how to improve and are set challenging targets with progress monitored regularly. Students with learning difficulties and physical disabilities also receive good support. Hardly any students are excluded and almost all students remain fully engaged in their work in school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school evaluates its leadership and management as good overall and the inspectors agree. The relatively new headteacher and his senior leadership team work well together and are focused effectively on bringing about improvement.

The monitoring of the work of faculties is increasingly systematic, through a well co-ordinated pattern of links between senior leaders and faculty managers, all working to a common agenda and timescale. Performance management is well integrated into this pattern. The overall effect has been a close focus on improving standards, which have risen in 2005.

The school's development planning expresses well the strategic direction the school intends to take. Self-evaluation is realistic and accurate, clearly identifying areas for development, without exaggerating the school's undoubted strengths. It could be developed by including the views of parents and others.

The governing body supports and challenges the school well. Governors fulfil all their legal requirements except for ensuring that all students receive a daily act of worship. Their roles as link governors to the various faculties are developing effectively. They have a clear idea of where the school should now be heading.

Leadership and management of the large and effective sixth form have been recently strengthened to good effect.

Resources are much improved since the last inspection but deficiencies in the accommodation remain. The school's finances are well controlled and a recent audit confirms they are well managed. When the students' well above average results and good progress is matched against the funding the school receives, the school provides good value for money.

The school has a good capacity to improve, for example in the rigorous attention to developing and improving teaching and learning involving senior and middle managers which has had an effect. Overall, the issues from the last inspection have been addressed effectively but the school has still to provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

The majority of parents and carers who gave their views to the inspectors agreed that the school provided a good quality education. A significant minority wanted better consultation before changes were made in the school. The school recognises that it needs to seek the views of parents more regularly and has plans to do this.

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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	1	

The quality of provision

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

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
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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To the students of:

Ponteland Community High School

Callerton Lane

Ponteland

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE20 9EY

14 January 2006

Dear Students

On behalf of my colleagues, I want to say thank you for your help during the inspection on 12 and 13 January. Thank you for the time you gave to talk about the school and about your work. We were impressed by the thoughtful way you spoke about your experience in school. You were positive about the school and appreciated what it was doing for you.

We enjoyed our visit. Ponteland is a good school in what it provides and in what it achieves. It has many strengths. We found that teaching and learning are well organised and that the relationships between you and your teachers are good. You are attentive in lessons, and well behaved around the school. The school ensures all students make good progress. In particular, it is aware that most of you have attained high standards in your previous school and your teachers take care to build on your achievement. As a result, you maintain high standards. The school also takes good care of your safety and well-being.

We have identified three main areas where the school should improve. The first of these is to ensure that boys are being as successful as girls. It is important to say that boys are not underachieving but that overall they add less to their previous achievement, when compared with girls. Boys especially have a part to play in improving this by ensuring that you are fully aware of your previous achievement, and are clear about what you should expect to achieve.

The majority of the parents who responded to the inspectors' questionnaire were positive about the school. We think that the school should respond to the concern from a minority who want to be consulted more regularly. This is the school's responsibility but you have a part to play by ensuring that you share information with your parents and discuss your life at school with them.

Finally, although we think the courses offered in the school are good, we think for students who have not attained highly, in Key Stage 4, the school should offer more courses which would benefit them.

The headteacher and his senior staff lead the school well. They are proud of its strengths but also know what can be better and are working hard on those areas. The school is making good improvement in its work.

Thank you again for your help and we wish you success and happiness in your time at Ponteland.

Yours sincerely

Peter Harris

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools