

Redcar Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111755
Local Authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	289043
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Maddison HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	813
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila Cooper
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Rees
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Kirkleatham Lane Redcar TS10 4AB
Telephone number	01642 289211
Fax number	01642 489202

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school serves the town of Redcar. Levels of social deprivation in the locality are above average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is more than double the national average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of students with statements of special educational need is slightly above average. Nearly all students are of White British heritage. There are very few looked after children.

The school has specialist status as a Visual and Performing Arts College. It is also a Full Service Extended School, the only one in Redcar and Cleveland. There is provision for 25 students with Moderate Learning Difficulties. The school has gained ArtsMark Gold Award, Investors in People status and the Healthy Schools Award.

When the school was inspected in May 2005, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Ofsted visited the school in November 2005 and judged it to be making good progress overall in taking action to remove the serious weaknesses identified.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The previous designation that the school has serious weaknesses no longer applies. This is now a good school. Achievement is good; in 2006 the achievement of students at Key Stage 4 in relation to when they started secondary school improved markedly and placed the school in the top 25% of schools nationally. However, there is scope for even better achievement and for more students, especially boys, to attain higher grades, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Attainment on entry varies from year to year and ranges from broadly average to below average. However, by the time they leave at the end of Year 11, students have made good progress. This is reflected in the quality of students' work seen in lessons and in books. These improvements are due to good teaching and because the vast majority of students are responding positively to the high expectations across the school. Challenging targets are being set and met, and the most recent assessment of performance indicates that students are on target to attain even higher standards this year at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The personal development of the students is good as are the care, guidance and support they receive. This is a result of the positive and caring ethos which is evident throughout the school and which is fostered by the effective house system and the mixed tutor groups which contain students from each year. Pastoral care is a strength of the school and is greatly valued by the students as well as their parents. Students are confident; they work together well and effectively develop the skills they need for later life. Students enjoy coming to school, as is shown by their improved attendance, their good relationships with each other as well as with staff, and their good behaviour. They appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities which are available and they willingly take responsibility in house, or whole school, capacities. The vast majority of students are attentive in lessons and good teaching helps to foster this positive climate for learning. Teachers are knowledgeable, plan well and routinely share lesson objectives with students. Their good practice strengthens learning. Although teaching overall is good, it is not yet consistently good or better across all subjects. Excellent practice in teaching and learning is beginning to be shared across subjects, but this is yet to impact fully across the whole school. The curriculum is good overall, and at Key Stage 4 is a particular strength of the school, providing a wide range of academic and vocational opportunities which effectively meet the needs of all students. Specialist school status is also a strength of the school and it is starting to have a significant impact on standards, on personal development and on the local community.

A key factor in the school's improvement is the highly effective leadership of the headteacher. He has been determined to raise achievement and standards and he is very well supported by his leadership team and by an increasingly effective group of middle leaders. Leadership and management are now good. Staff and governors have responded well to the lead taken by the headteacher and his senior team, and their support and dedication have contributed to recent improvements. The school evaluates its effectiveness accurately, with leaders demonstrating a clear understanding of the priorities that support effective school development. Judged by the progress the school has made since the last inspection, the way it has gone about tackling the weaknesses identified at that time, the improvement in results and the current achievement of students, the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards across the school, especially for boys and particularly in English, mathematics and science.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school to that of the very best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of students is good and rising. Attainment on entry varies from year to year and ranges from broadly average to below average. Results in national tests and examinations at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in 2006 showed that overall standards were rising. In classwork, many students show standards of work that are above average; they are making good progress. Students are doing better because teaching and learning are good and the vast majority are responding positively to the high expectations being set across the school. The school has introduced effective measures to raise standards in English at Key Stage 3 and recent assessments indicate that these are having the desired effect. The school's focus on raising standards is having a positive impact upon accelerating the progress students' make in lessons. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve well. This is because of the good support and guidance they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. Through its own self-evaluation, the school has accurately identified the performance of boys as a concern. To ensure they make good progress, a number of timely measures have been introduced to improve boys' achievement. The initial impact of these strategies is positive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is also strong. This is a result of the well taught personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme. Students enjoy school and are keen to learn. This is shown by their positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons and around the school, by their constructive relationships with each other and with staff, and by their improved attendance, which has now risen to be broadly in line with the national average. It is rare for students to be excluded because they respond well to the system of rewards and to the school's effective behaviour management initiatives. Younger students feel secure in school and say they are confident that staff or older students will help them resolve any problems that may arise. Students make positive contributions to the school and wider community and willingly take responsibility as assistant receptionists, senior students and 'buddy' peer mentors. Students serve on the active school council and are proud of their effectiveness in bringing about improvements, such as the recent changes to the playground facilities. They enjoy these opportunities which develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. Students are developing a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle; they benefit from regular exercise through the good allocation of time for physical education and dance, and they appreciate the improvements in food available in school. Students comment that they are being well prepared for life after school. Comprehensive careers advice, growing links with local employers and an increasing range of vocational courses have helped develop valuable skills and knowledge which will support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and this helps to explain the good achievement of students. In the most effective lessons, students enjoy their work because the lessons are well organised, involve challenging and varied activities and proceed at a good pace. Opportunities are taken towards the end of lessons to consolidate learning, and students generally leave classrooms secure that they have made progress. This results in motivated and interested students who are involved in their learning. Extensive, well focused professional development for teachers has underpinned the progress being made in strengthening the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, teachers are confident. They have a good understanding of how to teach their subjects, give clear explanations and plan well staged steps in learning that help the students to make good progress. Learning objectives are explained well, and make it clear what students need to do in order to make further progress. The school has been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning and much of the teaching observed during the inspection was judged to be good, sometimes outstanding. However, it is not yet consistently outstanding. Excellent practice in teaching and learning is beginning to be shared across subjects, but this is yet to impact fully across the whole school to the benefit of all staff and students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4. In Years 10 and 11 there is a wide choice of subjects, both academic and vocational, and students appreciate the opportunities open to them. The curriculum is well planned, increasingly in partnership with neighbouring schools and colleges, and effectively reflects the needs of the students, the school's context and its specialist status. An innovative 'Primary University' and the Galileo transition project provide a good introduction to secondary school life amongst Year 6 students as they prepare to enter the school. This work is reinforced by the teaching of learning skills in Years 7 and 8, and this aspect of the curriculum is beginning to have a positive impact on raising achievement. Support in class for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the curriculum is extended to offer additional challenges for higher attaining students. Specialist school status is having a considerable impact throughout the school; drama and dance, for example, play a significant part in enriching the Key Stage 3 curriculum. At Key Stage 4 all students take an arts subject and GCSE results in these subjects are amongst the best in the school. A varied programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including the performing arts, sports and residential visits, as well as revision and booster classes, contributes valuably to students' achievement, enjoyment and personal development. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the school's own Combined Cadet Force are particularly popular activities. The well planned work experience and PSHE and citizenship programmes equip students effectively for their future. They link effectively with the careers education and guidance programme that enables students to make informed decisions about their next steps after leaving school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for students are substantial strengths of the school. Students are well known to staff and say they feel safe and cared for. They trust staff to take their concerns seriously and value the steps taken by the school to deal with issues, such as bullying, should they occur. All required procedures for child protection and health and safety measures are in place. Strong partnerships with outside agencies help to provide sensitive and effective care and support for vulnerable students, including looked-after children, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, the progress of these students is as good as the progress of other students. Key features of the school's commitment to the care and guidance of the students are the innovative student support unit ('Sid's Place') and the Full Service Extended School arrangements. Both of these facilities successfully underpin the personal development of the students and contribute effectively to supporting students, their families and the local community. Extensive links with primary schools effectively smooth the transfer of students into Year 7. The guidance programme ensures students receive good support and information when making their subject choices at the end of Year 9, and when considering their subsequent career and post-16 educational opportunities. Both academic and pastoral progress is closely checked across the school and this is helping to improve performance. Students know their targets and how to improve their work. Those students who are likely to do less well than they should are quickly identified and effective support is promptly provided to bring them back on track.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. Since the last inspection the leadership of the headteacher has been highly effective. He has set down a clear direction for the school and, with an enthusiastic leadership team and a dedicated staff, he has focused the school upon raising standards and improving the quality of provision. In this he has been highly successful and decisive action has been taken to remedy the serious weaknesses identified at the last inspection, especially to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement and standards. As a result, the school is successfully removing barriers preventing learning for many students. A common sense of purpose helps to foster the positive learning atmosphere throughout the school. Day to day management is good and the school runs very smoothly. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and this has supported the ongoing focus on improvement. Improved recruitment and training is leading to an increasingly effective group of middle leaders. Governance is good; governors have a good grasp of the crucial issues facing the school and they provide effective challenge to senior leaders. They are committed to providing high quality education and care for the whole community. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and the strengths and weaknesses of the school are accurately identified. Sound financial management ensures staff and resources are well deployed and the school gives good value for money.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 April 2007

Dear students

Inspection of Redcar Community College, Redcar, TS10 4AB

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. We greatly appreciated the time you spent talking to us and we found your comments very helpful. As well as coming into lessons and looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by your parents. Like you, they were very supportive of the school.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to have a number of serious weaknesses. Over the last two years these have been dealt with. Your school has improved considerably and you now attend a good school which has many strengths. Here are some of them.

- You enjoy coming to school, you are getting better results in national tests and examinations and you make good progress.
- You generally behave well in lessons and around the school.
- You have good attitudes to learning and want to do well.
- You have a good curriculum especially at Key Stage 4 and you make the most of the good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Your teachers work hard on your behalf and you respond well, most of the time.
- You attend a school which is well run and well led.
- You are well supported by your teachers, especially when things go wrong.

You are making good progress but you could do even better, especially boys! We have asked the headteacher, the staff and the governors to help you achieve even higher standards, especially in English, mathematics and science. This is a top priority. We also want you to have the best teaching possible. As a result we have asked Mr Rees to ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning is shared amongst all the staff so that you all benefit.

However, you have your part to play! We want you to attend regularly, aim high, listen to the advice of your teachers and always try to improve.

We very much enjoyed visiting your school and I would like to thank you once again for being so friendly and polite.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Best wishes

Michael Maddison

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools