



Teesdale School, Science College and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114303
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289870
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mary Sewell

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Prospect Place
School category	Community		Barnard Castle, County Durham
Age range of pupils	11–18		DL12 8HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01833 638166
Number on roll (school)	791	Fax number	01833 695127
Number on roll (6th form)	148		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Jane Philbrick
		Headteacher	Mr Paul Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	17–18 January 2007	289870

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Teesdale School, Science College and Sixth Form Centre is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving a rural community in south west Durham. The school has been a Specialist Science College since 2003 and it has a Sportsmark Award. The numbers of students from minority ethnic groups or students whose first language is not English, who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or who take free school meals are below the national average. Three students are in the care of the Local Authority (LA).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Teesdale School is a satisfactory school with some good features. It provides a satisfactory education for students and satisfactory value for money. The school offers a welcoming learning environment despite its somewhat cramped accommodation.

Improvement since the last inspection has been slow but is now moving forward with more urgency. The staffing structure has been radically reviewed, resulting in a smaller management team with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Financial constraints have hindered the completion of this reorganisation which is necessary to sustain and develop management and drive forward the priorities that the school has correctly identified. Until recently key teachers have continued to perform more than one role and some middle managers lacked training in monitoring the work of their departments. Strategic plans and practice are not sufficiently well advanced or consistent enough across subjects to speed up the pace of improvement. There are examples of this in many aspects of the school's work including assessment procedures, behaviour management and lesson planning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Local Authority has supported the school by improving the management and quality of teaching in some subjects. The leaders of the school need to build on this work and to ensure these initiatives are driven through by rigorous and robust monitoring. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory.

Standards in GCSE have been above average and rose to well above average in 2006. This represents satisfactory achievement from students' starting points in Year 7. Maintaining and improving on these standards is a priority. Many of those students who were capable of achieving the highest grades were not doing so in the past. As a result the school has focussed on this and the results in 2006 and the school's assessment of current standards show a significant improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning, although judged to be satisfactory overall, is inconsistent. It ranges from outstanding in lessons which are well planned, energetic and challenging, to some inadequate teaching, that insufficiently meets the students' learning needs. The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the Sixth Form where subject choice is wide.

Students make good progress in their personal development. They have a good understanding of what to do to be healthy and they make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The care and support offered to students is good in the sixth form and satisfactory at other key stages. Students say they feel safe, are happy and are listened to. They enjoy their work and they have satisfactory skills to provide for their future economic well-being. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

Science College status has strengthened links with the local community, had a positive influence on the curriculum, but did not impact on raising standards until recently.

Good links with local employers provide the students with satisfactory opportunity for preparation for work.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges the effectiveness of the sixth form to be good, but inspectors found it to be satisfactory. Nearly half of all students stay on into the sixth form and the vast majority complete their courses. Standards at GCE AS and A level are average overall and students' achievement is satisfactory. There are particular strengths in some subjects where students make above average progress. Students' personal development is good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school offers a good range of courses at GCE AS and A level, but there are fewer level 2 courses offered. Modern foreign languages are taught in conjunction with another school using video conferencing. Those students spoken to were confident and articulate about their futures. They receive good guidance and support, particularly when choosing an appropriate university course. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards throughout the school.
- Increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching through rigorous and regular monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Complete the newly introduced staffing management structure so that intended improvements can be achieved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards are well above average and achievement is satisfactory. Boys and girls arrive in Year 7 with well above average attainment. Although results in national tests in English, mathematics and science taken in Year 9 were above average from 2003 to 2005, students did not make the progress they should have done. The 2006 results were very much better because the school introduced vigorous and effective methods to improve them. Performance in English and mathematics was stronger than in science but overall the 2006 results represent satisfactory achievement.

GCSE results have improved steadily and now represent satisfactory achievement. Between 2003 and 2005, results, although above average, were not as good as they should have been given the well above average intake to Year 7. Girls did better than boys as they did nationally. In 2006 results improved considerably because the proportion of students gaining the top grades A* and A rose substantially. The proportion of students with five GCSE results in the range A*–C, including English and mathematics, was well over half of all candidates. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those in the care of the

Local Authority achieved as well as other students. Successful intervention strategies improved results, especially at the higher grades in a range of subjects, but the challenging Specialist College targets in science were not met. The school has robust data, including early entry GCSE results, to show expectations of further improvements in GCSE standards in 2007.

The broadly average results at AS and A-level have consistently represented satisfactory achievement for an open access sixth form. In 2006, performance in A-level English language and literature and in vocational courses, including health and social care, were particularly strong. However, weaker results in the science subjects and mathematics meant that, as at GCSE, Specialist College targets were not met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is generally good, except when teaching fails to capture students' interest, generating restlessness. The recent strategies for promoting good behaviour have reduced exclusions and boosted the performance of students. Students say that there are relatively few incidents of bullying and these are dealt with effectively. Attendance is satisfactory. Students are punctual, enjoy school and are willing to learn.

Moral, social and cultural development is good. A programme of visits contributes to students' good understanding of the richness of cultural diversity of America, Russia and modern Britain. Many students enjoy extra music and drama. There are fewer opportunities for spiritual development and that is satisfactory.

Students are willing to take initiative and exercise responsibility. As a result they make positive and impressive contributions to the community by fundraising for charities. The school council contributes effectively to students' well-being. The sixth form council showed impressive maturity and have raised the funds to improve the sixth form facilities.

Students have a good awareness of how to stay safe, the importance of physical activity, and a healthy lifestyle. They respond well to the opportunities provided to take part in a good range of extra-curricular sporting activity and they have responded positively to eating more healthily. Students' development of skills which support their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning in the main school and in the sixth form is satisfactory overall but is inconsistent in quality. It ranges from outstanding in lessons which are well planned, and challenging, to inadequate when teaching insufficiently matches the students' learning needs. Recent strategies and practices to raise the quality of teaching are having a positive impact. In subjects, for example, where the school or local authority consultants support the development of teaching there is a demonstrable improvement in the quality of students' work.

In the best lessons, brisk pace, challenge and the effective use of resources make learning exciting and enjoyable. Teachers set students challenging targets and help them understand how they will be assessed. However, in least satisfactory lessons teachers' plans and expectations for students to do their best are not good enough and students become restless. This is because teachers do not use the schools' learning guidelines sufficiently to inform their planning.

The use of marking and test results to set targets for individual students is improving. Students increasingly use these assessments to see what they need to do in order to improve. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities have work suitably matched to their needs. Good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance teaching. However, there are a large number of classes taught by more than one teacher. This makes continuity of learning more difficult.

The quality of teaching and learning overall in the Sixth Form is satisfactory with some good elements. Appropriate challenge, quality discussion and the innovative use of information and communication technology were seen to be impacting positively upon learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the curriculum in the main school is satisfactory and good in the sixth form. It is broad, balanced and meets the needs of students.

More than half the students take up German as a second language which is studied to GCSE level. A good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) delivers citizenship, enterprise and work-related learning. A major local employer supports the applied science, applied construction and the built environment courses. This enables students to link their learning firmly in the world of work. Information and communication technology is an emerging strength of the school, with virtual learning activities beginning to have an impact. The provision for literacy, numeracy, religious education and physical education all meet government

requirements. Students are satisfactorily prepared for future economic well-being with work experience. International understanding is a growing strength of the school. A large number of the students enjoy extra-curricular activities.

The quality of the curriculum in the Sixth Form is good overall. It offers over thirty different courses some of which are delivered by e-learning.

The impact of the school's specialist status as a Science College upon the curriculum and learning is variable. Challenging Specialist targets have not been met but the school has won science awards, conducted outreach work with primary schools and local colleges and engaged parents in science and technology learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for its students. Relationships between staff and students are good and students say that they feel safe and well cared for. Arrangements for ensuring that students are safeguarded are in place. Support for more vulnerable students is strong, backed up through good liaison with appropriate outside agencies. The quality of support for vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties is satisfactory and this is reflected in their satisfactory achievement.

Arrangement for transition from primary schools is good. Careers guidance is satisfactory and enables students to make informed decisions about subject choices in Year 9 and for post-16 courses or training. The academic guidance offered to students through the setting of appropriate targets is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced a well-devised procedure for setting individual targets for students aged 11 to 16 and monitoring progress towards them. This is still developing and the school recognises that it needs some refinements to improve its effectiveness. Consequently it has yet to have a significant effect on standards or students' achievement.

The care, guidance and support provided for students in the sixth form is good. Students have been pleased to visit universities and their take up for higher education courses is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision for improving provision in the school and for raising standards and achievement. He is beginning successfully to convert his vision into reality as better procedures for monitoring and evaluation result in improvements, particularly in standards. The means to co-ordinate the new procedures and systems is the partly implemented revised

staffing structure. It is vital that this is finalised as soon as possible so that post-holders can all play their intended part in the envisaged developments. Good governance is fully supporting the headteacher in restructuring the school's management and driving results upwards.

Senior staff and middle managers already enthusiastically and effectively manage several of the intended developments. For example, assessment and monitoring of performance levels as students move through the school are strengthening significantly. The analysis of the examination performance of subjects has developed well. However, there is still much to be done. For example, the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior and middle managers, although accurate, is insufficiently frequent.

The school provides the students with a positive learning atmosphere. It runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Financial management is strong. Improvement since the previous inspection and capacity to effect further development are both satisfactory.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

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	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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Teesdale School, Science College and Sixth Form Centre

Prospect Place

Barnard Castle

County Durham

DL12 8HH

17 January 2007

Dear Students

It was a pleasure to visit your school this week. We thought that you all behaved in a mature and sensible way around school and despite the cramped conditions, moved around the building in an orderly manner.

We especially thank those of you who came to speak to us at lunchtime. You told us your teachers encouraged you to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. It was interesting to hear how you helped change things through your school council.

We agree with you that most of your teaching helps you to learn satisfactorily. In some lessons you learn quickly but unfortunately this is not true of all your lessons. In some classes the work is not challenging enough for you and you fail to reach the very high standards we expect from your junior school reports. Some of you understood your learning targets and what you need to do in order to improve your work but this was not always the case. Your headteacher and teachers are trying to improve all the teaching so that all of it becomes very good.

We were also pleased at the large numbers of you who stayed on at school to study a course at 'A' level. It was particularly interesting to hear how you study German using video conferencing and computer aided learning.

Your governors provide good leadership for the school and have started to reorganise the jobs the teachers do so that teachers are better able to check that improvements are being made. These changes must be completed quickly in order that the work of the school is improved. We have also asked your headteacher and governors to improve two other things. We think that you are capable of much higher results and so we have asked them to raise standards in future years. We have also asked them to keep observing the teaching and checking on your work so that your learning improves. Thank you all so much for your time.

We wish you all the very best in the future

Mary Sewell

Lead Inspector