

Longbenton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108645
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	309754
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Marianne Young 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	878
6th form	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Goodwin
Headteacher	Mr James Cockburn
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2004
School address	Hailsham Avenue Longbenton Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE12 8ER
Telephone number	0191 2007474
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Age group	11-19
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Longbenton Community College is about the same size as most secondary schools and is situated to the east of Newcastle upon Tyne. The college serves a mixed area with pockets of economic and social deprivation. A higher than average percentage of students is entitled to free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion with a statement of special education need is in line with national figures. Relatively few students are from backgrounds other than White British. In Years 9 and 10, boys outnumber girls by a considerable margin. There is a small sixth form run in collaboration with two other schools. Since 1998, the college has held technology specialist status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Longbenton Community College is a popular specialist technology college and provides a good standard of education in almost all areas. Nevertheless its overall effectiveness is inadequate because the procedures for safeguarding students so that the college meets all current government requirements are not in place. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to ensuring that all procedures for safeguarding learners, including Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, are completed and recorded as part of the statutory requirements, and for inclusion on the college's single central register.

Students enter the college with average academic standards. By the end of their time at the college they achieve well. The proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE was above the national average in 2007. Students make more rapid progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 across a range of subjects. In recent years, given their starting points, students have not progressed well enough in science during Key Stage 3. Students did not meet their challenging targets for performance at the higher levels in English in 2007, but results remained above the national averages, as in previous years. More students than expected nationally attain the higher levels in mathematics. All early indications from the college's tracking system and from work seen during the inspection, point to much improved performance overall and encouragingly, in science. School data confirm that students are making good progress and more are on track to meet their targets. This improvement stems from the determined course of action taken by senior managers, curriculum leaders and teachers' willingness to implement new ideas and strategies. Overall, teaching is good. Most teachers have good subject knowledge, make lessons interesting through a variety of well planned activities and ensure that students know how to improve their work. However, because it takes students considerable time to move around the extensive site, lessons occasionally start late. More able students in Key Stage 3 benefit from being entered early for some GCSE subjects. Senior leaders recognise the need to make more changes to the curriculum for all students in Years 7 to 9, and especially for the less able, in order to better meet individual needs.

The specialist technology status has brought several benefits to the college, despite falling short of its planned targets in 2007. There is a broad range of provision in design technology. The technology, ICT, and mathematics departments work closely with many of the feeder primary schools. Younger students enjoy a positive experience of these subjects before they join the college in Year 7.

The college has many good aspects and these should not be diminished by the Notice to Improve that has been issued to the college. Students' personal development is good. Generally they show mature and responsible attitudes when moving around what is a difficult and extensive site. Despite the failure of the college to comply fully with the statutory requirements in relation to CRB checks, the college's other systems for supporting and guiding students are good. There are very good partnerships with other agencies. The updated behaviour management procedures provide effective support for those students who experience difficulty in managing their own behaviour and have been effective in reducing the number of exclusions.

Senior staff and governors know the strengths of the college in most areas despite having a more positive view of its work than inspectors. Aspects of the college's work are monitored, for example the departmental reviews conducted jointly by senior and curriculum leaders. Some monitoring done by senior leaders including safeguarding, for instance, is insufficiently robust. Curriculum leaders enthusiastically support initiatives that provide students with high quality learning experiences. This has led to the improved standards in most subjects. The college provides sound value for money and its capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 4

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall although attainment varies between subjects. In 2007, overall standards dipped. Systems for checking students' progress have been strengthened in response to a review of last year's performance. Tracking of the progress being made by the current students in Years 12 and 13 indicates that most are expected to achieve their target grades this year. Most students successfully complete their courses and they are able to access their higher education and career choices. Teaching in the sixth form is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In the best lessons students are enthusiastic about the use of ICT, especially virtual learning. They relish the opportunities for independent research and the seminar style delivery from their teachers. The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Changes to meet the needs of local employers are evident through a wider range of vocational options. A good example of this is the course for airline cabin crew. Students are well informed, confident and articulate young people. They enjoy being in the sixth form and are happy with the guidance they receive both academically and personally. They have positive and business-like relationships with each other and their tutors. Secure arrangements between staff for monitoring students' presence in college has resulted in their good attendance and high retention rates. However, arrangements for safeguarding do not meet statutory requirements. The newly appointed head of sixth form provides satisfactory leadership. The monitoring of both teaching and students' progress is undertaken by the curriculum leaders and does not enable the head of the sixth form to gain a coherent overview of either the quality of teaching and learning or individual student achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that senior leaders monitor all of the college's work effectively.
- Make sure that the college complies fully with current Government requirements for safeguarding.
- Ensure that more students in Key Stage 3 reach the higher levels in science.
- Adapt the curriculum in Key Stage 3 to better meet the needs of all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the college with standards that are broadly average. By the age of 16, standards are above average and achievement overall is good. Students make more rapid progress in Years 10 and 11; they do particularly well in English. The proportion of students at the end of Year 11 in 2007 attaining at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, rose compared to the previous year and was just above that seen nationally. A significant number of students also achieved three passes in science. More able girls did particularly well

in achieving the highest A* and A grades, especially in art and design, English, design technology, history and mathematics.

Overall, achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Unlike previous years, students in Year 9 did not meet their challenging targets for performance at the higher levels in English in the 2007 national tests. More students than is expected nationally, however, attained the higher levels in mathematics. Performance in science continued to be weaker than in English and mathematics. However, more rigorous monitoring, together with changes to the provision within the science department, has turned round a relatively long period of underachievement and students' progress in science is improving rapidly. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar good progress overall relative to their capabilities and to that of their peers because they are well supported.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' enjoyment of college life is evident in most lessons and through their active participation in the extended curriculum opportunities provided. Those students involved in the national newspaper competition to produce a copy of the 'Benton Bugle', spoke enthusiastically about the event as they chased news stories and interviews during the second day of the inspection. Attendance is broadly average. Despite the best efforts of the college, including the appointment of a college based education welfare officer, the poor attendance of some students has a negative impact on the standards they attain. It is the main reason why a few students leave the college with no formal qualification. Through a clear system of rewards and sanctions most students have a thorough understanding of what is morally and socially acceptable. Most students are polite, well-mannered and conduct themselves sensibly around the site. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It is often good in lessons but there are instances where low level disruption interrupts learning. The number of students excluded has reduced. Students feel safe and know the actions to take if they are bullied. There is a growing awareness of, and participation in, healthy eating by many students however, a large number of older ones continue to choose less healthy off-site options at lunchtimes. Students make good contributions to the wider community, particularly through charity work, which extends to national and international communities and helps develop their cultural awareness. By the end of Year 11 students develop a good range of work-based skills and leave well-equipped to move onto the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

There is a consistent approach to lesson planning throughout the school. In the best lessons, students know what they will learn and what they need to do to achieve a particular grade or level. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and end purposefully with opportunities for students to review the knowledge or skills they have gained. Teachers use a range of interesting activities so students are engaged actively in their learning. Teachers use questions purposefully to ascertain what students know and to challenge them to extend their thinking. Students are

becoming more involved in the assessment of their own and each others' work. This is building their confidence and helping them to improve their own work. Group work provides good opportunities for students to work collaboratively, but even in the best lessons teachers miss opportunities to extend this further. In less successful, but still satisfactory lessons, learning objectives lack focus and the work provided is not always adequately matched to the needs of individual students. Teachers sometimes talk too much so that students spend too little time learning for themselves and with other students. On occasion, insufficient time is available for students to complete their work or for teachers to check at the end of lessons what students have learnt. Some work is marked well, but other marking is inconsistent and not always helpful in telling students how to improve. Where teaching assistant support is available, it is used well to help those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially when withdrawn for one-to-one or for small group work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is broad, balanced and offers a wide range of subjects. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is beginning to provide more challenge for those students who are more able. However, the college recognises the potential of developing the curriculum further for students in Years 7 to 9, especially for those who are less able. The college's commitment to find courses that will raise the aspirations of all students has led to more vocational options at Key Stage 4 and an alternative curriculum, including work placements, for the most vulnerable students.

Unfortunately this does not as yet include clear progression routes into further education. There is a good emphasis on developing the core skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the college. A good programme of personal, social and health education, including the citizenship curriculum, contributes effectively to students' good personal development. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities and visits to support students' learning. A varied programme of extra-curricular activities in languages, sports and the arts is valued and enjoyed by many students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 4

Although the college provides good provision in almost all of these aspects, the overall quality of care, guidance and support is inadequate because the college does not comply fully with all legal requirements for safeguarding its students. Even though regular risk assessments are carried out on what is an extensive site, the actions identified to limit risk to students' safety are not implemented rigorously. Good transition procedures enable students in Year 7 to settle well and for Year 11 leavers to move confidently into sixth form provision, training or employment. The use of assessment data to ensure students understand how well they are progressing is effective. However, not all students are confident about how to use this information to improve and to achieve their potential in some subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good support, both in the classroom and through their various individual intervention programmes. The targets in their individual education plans are closely monitored and reviewed ensuring that most of these students make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

The principal and senior team have a clear vision for the college which is supported by staff and governors. There is a determination that standards should continue to rise and to ensure that all students achieve as well as they can. Nonetheless, leadership and management are inadequate overall. Inspectors drew the college's attention to its failure to meet all the current statutory requirements relating to safeguarding. Action to tackle this weakness is an urgent priority. Curriculum leaders have a clear understanding of the work of their subject areas and are enthusiastic supporters of the drive to raise standards further. The regular departmental reviews clearly identify the priorities needed to improve further individual subjects. Challenging targets are set; however the specialist targets for technology and science were not met in 2007.

Some parents are very supportive and pleased with the work of the college. However there are still continuing concerns from some parents and students that bullying is not always taken seriously enough. Inspectors found that systems are in place but there is inconsistency in the way issues are followed up. Improvement since the previous inspection is evident especially in the work undertaken to raise attainment in some subjects. Governors know the college well and play their part in shaping its future direction. They are helping to keep a close eye on expenditure and their rigour is helping to reduce the current budget deficit.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	4

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?	4	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of Longbenton Community College, North Tyneside, NE 12 8ER

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and my colleagues when we came to inspect your college. We were grateful to all of you who spoke with us during the two days, and to those of your parents who returned the inspection questionnaire. In almost all respects, the college is providing you with a good standard of education. Your test and examination results are improving especially in science. We were pleased to see how sensible you are when moving around the college and how well you get on with each other and your teachers. Although a number of you still do not attend college regularly, attendance for most of you is improving.

However, the college is legally required to confirm that all adults are 'fit and proper' to work with you. This information, and some other important details, should be kept on a single central register that can be checked by inspectors when they visit the college. In this respect, we have issued the college with a Notice to Improve, as the college failed to provide the inspection team with the correct information. This means that more inspectors will visit the college within the next eight months to ensure that this issue has been resolved fully.

In addition to this very important aspect we have found two other areas where the college could improve further so we have asked the principal and staff -

- to ensure that more of you in Key Stage 3 reach the higher levels in science.
- to investigate the potential of developing the curriculum further for students in Years 7 to 9, especially for those of you who find learning difficult.

We hope that all of you will continue to play your part in helping the college to make further improvements.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young

Her Majesty's Inspector