

Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114311
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311559
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Deborah Wright

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	488
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bell
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Lakey
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2004
School address	Ushaw Moor Durham County Durham DH7 7NG
Telephone number	0191 3730336
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Durham Community Business College is a smaller than average comprehensive school. Student numbers have decreased over the last few years. The school serves an area of high social deprivation and the number of students entitled to a free school meal is well above the national average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Nearly all students come from White British backgrounds. In September 2005, the school was designated a specialist College for Business, Technology and Enterprise. The school is part of a Federation with another local school and the headteacher, governing body and leadership team operate across both schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Durham Community Business College is a satisfactory school.

Students enter school with standards which are below average although their literacy skills are often well below average. Students make satisfactory progress throughout their time at the school. Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 in 2007 were below average, however at Key Stage 4, standards have risen for the last three years. In Key Stage 3, standards are improving in mathematics and science. The performance of students in English has been closely analysed and monitored and appropriate adaptations have been made to teaching, staffing and management. This is beginning to have an impact but standards in English remain below average.

The school makes a good contribution to students' personal development and well being. Students say they feel secure and safe in school. They take advantage of opportunities to take on responsibility in school and they contribute to the local community through charitable activities.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some good teaching was observed by inspectors. However, the school recognises that it needs to review its strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school to ensure that they lead to improved achievement for students. Some teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan lessons that will enable students to make good progress. The school's good curriculum reflects its business, technology and enterprise specialism and provides a range of academic, vocational and work related courses designed to meet individual needs. All aspects of students' care and support are satisfactory and there is good care for vulnerable students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection and the school has the capacity to improve further. Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The restructuring of the senior leadership team following the move to federation status leaves the school in a position to consolidate this progress. Well targeted whole school initiatives have led to improvements in attendance, behaviour and standards at GCSE, including English and mathematics. Middle leaders are increasingly accountable for their areas of responsibility and some are effective in raising standards. However, not all subject leaders have developed the expertise to monitor their areas effectively and there remains considerable variability in the performance of departments. Senior leaders are addressing this as a priority with the support of the local authority.

The school's evaluation of its performance is good and recognises that there is still much to do to bring about further improvement.

The school has the support of the majority of parents who expressed their appreciation about the quality of education it provides

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching in order to raise standards and accelerate progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Use information about students' attainment and achievement more effectively to inform planning for teaching and learning.
- Strengthen the quality of middle managers in raising standards and improving progress.

- Ensure greater consistency and precision in the feedback students receive to improve their learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with attainment which is below average for their age. The majority of students make satisfactory progress in their learning and by the end of Year 11 they attain standards which are below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement given the lower starting point in respect of literacy.

In 2007, national test results at the end of Key Stage 3 were below average but showed some improvement in mathematics and science. In English, results were not as good as the previous year. This was due in part to staffing difficulties. The school has taken appropriate action by implementing a range of strategies that support learning. As a result, standards in the current Year 9 indicate that the number of students on track to achieve their predicted levels has increased.

In 2007, the proportion of students leaving school with five or more higher grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics increased. Although still below the national average, this continues an improving trend over the last three years. However, there were significant differences in the performance of students in different subjects. For example, students performed well in design and technology but results in English and mathematics were lower than expected. Results were affected by a number of students who were on roll at the school but did not attend or who joined the school part way through a key stage. The school has again intervened purposefully and current standards in Year 11, reflected in the results of early entry for GCSE examinations, show the school is on track to exceed last year's results in English and mathematics.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the good systems in place to support them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They respond well to encouragement to lead a healthy lifestyle. Many participate in the range of opportunities for sporting activities outside of lessons and take healthy meals at lunchtime. Students speak confidently and positively about their life at school and this is shown in their improving attendance. Students say they feel safe and that any incidences of bullying or poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively by adults whom they trust, and by other students who are trained to give support in such cases. There is some challenging behaviour in lessons where students are not fully engaged. The level of fixed term exclusions, although improving, remains above the expected level.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, for example students demonstrate a good awareness of cultural diversity, shown by their involvement in a range of activities with representatives of different faiths and cultures. Students make a positive contribution to their

local community and beyond through activities such as charity fund-raising. The school council is a strong feature of the school with students recommending and achieving improvements for the school environment and some of its members participating in governing body meetings. These activities support the development of students' understanding of citizenship. Students are adequately prepared for their future economic well-being; in particular, their awareness of skills for future employment is raised through the school's specialist subjects and through the vocational and work related courses available to them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The majority of students make satisfactory progress in their learning because teaching is satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. The best lessons are well structured with a clear sense of purpose and a variety of activities which engage students and sustain their interest. These lessons are characterised by positive relationships between teacher and students, opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and an effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). In a health and social care lesson, for example, students reflected on their recent experiences in a local crèche and shared responsibility for their learning by discussing the risks associated with hygiene for the very young. In less successful lessons, work is not matched to the students' needs and capabilities because teachers do not always make best use of assessment information. There is too much or too little challenge. Limited opportunities for students to be actively engaged in the lesson occasionally lead to inappropriate behaviour.

Well targeted staff training and support has contributed to some improvement in teaching and learning, particularly in the less effective lessons. In mathematics for example, the effective use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning has increased students' motivation and enjoyment of lessons. However, progress is still hindered by the wide range in the quality of teaching and learning which students experience.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. The provision for older students has been strengthened considerably in recent years, due in part to the school's specialist status and in part to the federation arrangements with another local school. The school has made good use of the resources available through its specialist status to enhance provision, for example facilities for ICT have improved and these are making a contribution to the progress of students.

There is an increasing range of relevant vocational courses available to students, designed for those not wanting to follow a traditional academic pathway. Work related opportunities are supported through links with local colleges, employers and training providers and reflect local employment and training opportunities. These different pathways mean that students can choose a programme well matched to their individual needs. The support students receive in making choices for further study, training or employment is good. The school has been particularly successful in increasing the number of students who continue with their studies or find work.

There is good provision for extra-curricular activities in the specialist subjects and in other areas such as sport. These are a constructive feature of the school and enhance students' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, although aspects of pastoral care are strong. The school provides effective pastoral care and emotional support for all students, including those who are vulnerable or who are at risk of disaffection. These students thrive in the designated respite areas where every opportunity is taken to build up confidence and self-esteem and to improve achievement. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that students and their families receive support when necessary.

Well established child protection procedures are in place and staff have received relevant training. Appropriate checks and safeguarding procedures meet expected requirements. Procedures for the transfer of students from primary school are effective and benefit from the strong partnerships built with local schools. All students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate information and advice about future career pathways as they move up the school. This work is supported by links with external partners and outside agencies.

The school analyses and tracks students' progress and achievement closely and the assessment of students' progress is now more accurate and consistent. However, this information is not used well enough to inform teachers' planning and to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of individual students. Students are not always clear about the next steps they need to take to move forward in their learning because marking and pointers to improvement are not sufficiently precise or consistent across all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school which is shared with and understood by staff at all levels. She leads by example and displays tremendous commitment to the students and staff. Together with the senior leadership team, she has taken effective steps to tackle areas identified as requiring improvement in the last inspection. Changes to the senior leadership team, as a result of transition to federation status, have led to appropriate delegation to senior staff for discrete areas of the school's work.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Reasons for underachievement are well understood through the improved use and understanding of information to monitor students' progress. Leaders at all levels have a better view of how the school and individual students are progressing. Nonetheless, more attention needs to be focussed on teaching and learning and its impact on student achievement. Through regular monitoring of teaching, senior leaders have an overview of its quality, but these procedures are not yet providing a clear picture of the steps which need to be taken to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning improves across the school. The school has been more successful in identifying where teaching is less successful and has provided appropriate support and training.

Governors' knowledge of the school is good and improving through activities such as links to departments. They receive regular and accurate reports from the school's senior leadership team and are in a strong position to hold senior leaders and staff to account. The school currently provides satisfactory value for money.

The school makes good use of external agencies to support its work and this is appropriately targeted to tackle the areas which need improvement. The school promotes equal opportunities and ensures that all students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can participate in the full range of provision.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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
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

7 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise, Durham, DH7 7NG

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection. We appreciated your willingness to talk to us in meetings and informally around school. We are also grateful to those of your parents who returned the inspection questionnaire. I am writing to tell you about our findings.

Durham Community Business College provides you with a satisfactory education and it is seeking to improve further. We saw some good lessons and noted how many of you enjoyed your lessons. The curriculum has been developed to offer you a wide range of courses that better meet all students' needs. You told us that you appreciate the range of activities you can choose to do outside lessons. Some of you take on responsibilities, including representing others on the school council. You told us you feel safe in school and the few bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Mrs Lakey, the staff and governors are working hard to ensure that you all achieve the best you can. They have a clear idea of where improvements are needed. The main area for improvement is raising standards and improving students' achievement. For this to happen, we have asked the school to ensure that there is a higher proportion of good or better teaching and to ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information when planning lessons. We have also asked the school to mark your work with clear guidelines on how you can improve, and to involve departmental leaders in improving standards and achievement. You can play your part by making sure you work hard and do your best.

Please accept our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Wright

Lead inspector