

Fyndoune Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114289
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325983
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Elaine Colquhoun

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 (total)	362
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Bell
Headteacher	Mr Trevor Dunn
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Findon Hill Sacriston Durham DH7 6LU
Telephone number	0191 3710277
Fax number	0191 3712269

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Fyndoune is a smaller than average community college which gained specialist status in 'Humanities with a Rural Dimension' in 2007. The college was federated with Durham Community Business College in 2006. The Durham Federation model is currently one of co-headship which enables management of the federation across both sites. A new principal has been in place at Fyndoune College site since September 2008.

A very small number of students come from minority ethnic groups. There are more students with a statement of special educational need than normally found and the number of students with (learning difficulties and/or disabilities) is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has gained numerous awards including Eco-school Bronze and Silver, Social Enterprise Foundation Award, and the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Fyndoune is a satisfactory college which is improving. The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been relatively slow but is now increasing. The college's evaluation of its own performance by leaders is accurate.

Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory. This reflects the low starting points for some groups of students who enter the school with below average attainment. Most learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. The senior leadership and teachers are aware of students who are not doing as well as they should and are acting decisively to raise achievement through the targeting of resources in order to improve standards. There are early indications results in early entry GCSE English have improved. The unvalidated test results for the 2008 Year 9 cohort were below average, students performed better in English than in mathematics and science where the school did not reach its overall targets. GCSE results in 2008 did not meet the school's expectations with particular underachievement in mathematics. The school's own tracking and monitoring of progress, together with early examination results, indicate that standards and achievement are improving.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is an increased range of subjects, academic and vocational which serves the needs of students adequately and matches the interest of the local community well. The opportunities from specialist status and the shared resources of the two schools have increased the range of subjects and qualifications.

The personal development and well-being of the students are satisfactory as are the care, guidance and support students receive. The pastoral support for vulnerable students is good. Current national requirements for safeguarding students are met and arrangements for child protection are thorough. Students are well known to staff and say they feel valued as individuals, listened to and looked after. Very few parents reported to inspectors that there was concern about bullying. Students generally behave satisfactorily in and around college and, although they remain high, exclusion rates have improved.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving and is contributing to the improvement in achievement but it is not yet good overall. Best practice in teaching and learning is being shared across subjects. In the most successful lessons teachers establish good relationships with students and have high expectations and motivate students with their enthusiasm for the subject, using a variety of interesting activities. However too many lessons are satisfactory because teachers' expectations are not high enough and the level of challenge is too low.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There have been significant changes to the college leadership team; this includes the appointment of the new principal who joined the college in September 2008. These changes have strengthened the opportunities for sharing expertise, staff and resources through the Durham Federation arrangements and this is beginning to improve the achievements of students. Middle leaders are well supported by the leadership team. They have begun to evaluate performance in their areas of responsibility but this has not yet made a full impact on achievement and standards. Governors' leadership is good; they are knowledgeable and aware of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They support and challenge the college well. Leaders understand what needs improving and what needs to be done. Recent data are used effectively to set challenging targets for the whole college and departments. This has enabled leaders and managers to successfully improve the progress made by the students currently in Year 11. The college therefore has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Resources are deployed adequately in order to raise achievement and the college gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further particularly in mathematics and in the proportion of students' gaining five GCSE graded A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Improve teaching by raising teachers' expectations, engaging and challenging students more effectively, and strengthening independent learning.
- Improve the personal development and well-being of students by strengthening existing behaviour-management systems to further reduce exclusions.
- Strengthen the evaluation and monitoring of middle managers to improve their contribution to raising attainment.

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' achievement is satisfactory. Their attainment on entry to the college is below average and particularly low in English. From their low starting points, students are currently making satisfactory progress and standards are improving.

In 2008 students reached below average standards in tests at the end of Year 9. They achieved best in English where targets were met but less well in mathematics and science. GCSE results in 2008 were below average and students' achievement was just satisfactory overall. However students underachieved in mathematics where results were well below average. The percentage of students gaining five higher A* to C grades including English and mathematics fell from that of the previous year and this target was not met. However the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G increased and this target was reached. Students achieved best in physical education, food technology, media and business studies.

Although examination results indicate there was underachievement in the past, particularly in mathematics, current inspection evidence indicates that standards are improving. These improvements are the result of a raft of measures the college has put in place to boost students' learning. The impact of this work is now seen in improved modular examination results for students in Years 10 and 11 and increased numbers of students who are on track to meet their targets in all subjects across both key stages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. Attendance is improving and is now at the national average. The college is working strenuously to improve this further and strategies such as mentoring, the appointment of an attendance officer and good links with outside agencies are having positive impact. The support provided for targeted individual students, for example, through the Inclusion Suite, is also a key factor.

Behaviour is satisfactory. There is a clear code of conduct in the college. Students are beginning to respond to its clear expectations and this is reflected in their generally positive behaviour

in lessons and around college. Implementing the revised policy for behaviour management is reducing the need to use exclusion as a sanction, although the proportion excluded remains a cause for concern. A united and effective approach to managing behaviour is emerging and students say they appreciate the fairness of the staged consequences to their actions. The incidence of bullying is also falling. Students say they feel safe and that the college is a caring and well ordered community.

Students make positive contributions to the college and its wider community. The college council provides students with good opportunities to take responsibility and influence the life of the college. They are confident their views are listened to and acted upon. Students develop a fair sense of right and wrong helped by the programme of worship and through discussions in religious education, English and humanities lessons. They develop a sense of responsibility for others through fundraising for charity. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities contributes well to the students' social and cultural development.

Students are encouraged to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. The pastoral guidance programme effectively helps them learn about health related issues, including drugs awareness and sex education. They benefit from regular exercise through their good participation in physical education and extra-curricular sporting activities. Careers advice, a developing range of vocational courses, together with positive links with local employers, provide a foundation in the preparation of students for their adult lives, but weaknesses in basic skills remain a key factor in restricting choices available to them in further education and training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A good programme of staff training, development and close monitoring of the quality of lessons has led to rising standards, improved teaching and learning and a satisfactory rate of progress for students. Teachers are checking students' progress more regularly and making better use of the results of tests and assessments to plan lessons. In the best lessons teaching is lively, knowledgeable and engaging so students work hard and enjoy their learning. In some lessons the pace of learning is slower. This is because teachers' introductions can be too lengthy, lessons gather pace slowly, or pupils are left to work on their own for too long at tasks which are not sufficiently challenging. In most lessons relationships are good and teachers manage students' behaviour well so any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are prevented from disturbing the learning of others. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants so they make the same progress as their peers. Marking is satisfactory overall. There are examples of very helpful marking, particularly in English, which give students clear pointers on how to improve their work. However this good practice is not consistent across the college.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory because it is broad, balanced and meets the needs and aspirations of the majority of students throughout the attainment range. The college has added to its range of subjects and qualifications. The specialist status of both schools within the Durham Federation provides good opportunities for students at Fyndoune, however, this has yet to have the planned effect on students' attainment. At Key Stage 4 a good range of technical,

vocational and academic subjects is provided together with opportunities for students to undertake Young Apprenticeships in Business Administration and Construction. Productive links are made with a variety of partners including local business, support workers and the police. The college is building on these links and those with other schools and colleges to extend the work-related curriculum.

A varied programme of additional and extra-curricular activities, including sport, cookery and art contributes valuably to students' achievement, enjoyment and personal development. Students of all ages and abilities take advantage of the various sporting activities and clubs. They are very enthusiastic about the range and quantity of activities on offer and are keen to report their enjoyment and high rate of participation. These activities, together with the personal, social and health education programme, make an important contribution to students' personal development and well-being. Personalised learning programmes have been satisfactorily developed to engage those students who have identified learning needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There is a good level of commitment and concern for the welfare of each student, regardless of capability or circumstance. Risk assessment, particularly for out of college visits, is taken seriously. Students are very well known to staff and they say they feel safe and well cared for. They trust staff to take their concerns seriously and value the steps taken by the college to deal with issues such as bullying when they occur.

Effective partnerships with outside agencies help to provide sensitive care and support for vulnerable students. The introduction of the Inclusion Suite has been a notable success in ensuring these students receive constructive and individual help. Effective links with feeder primary schools smooth the transfer of students into Year 7. A well planned guidance programme ensures that students receive good individual support and information, for example, when making subject choices at the end of Year 9 and when deciding on their subsequent career and post-16 educational opportunities. Improving links with parents are maintained through regular progress meetings. Parents are satisfied with the college and its efforts; both they and their children appreciate the care provided by staff.

Academic and personal progress is tracked throughout the college and students' performance shows improvement. Checks on progress are regular and those slipping behind are targeted to receive additional support. Most students know their targets, but are less clear about how to improve their work because the quality of marking and feedback from teachers is not yet consistent across the college. The rewards scheme provides praise for those who do well and this is helping to support improvements in personal development and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership structure of the Durham Federation fosters a sense of collective accountability for Fyndoune college improvement among senior and middle leaders. These structures are at an early stage of development due to changes within the leadership team. The responsibilities of senior leaders have recently been reorganised and it is too soon to evaluate the full effect of the changes. Senior and middle leaders are working closely together to raise standards across the college and this is beginning to have a

positive impact on students' achievement. This is supported by interim examination results and in students' work.

The college did not reach most of its challenging academic targets in 2008, when performance was not consistently good across all subjects and was particularly disappointing in mathematics.

The monitoring and evaluation of standards and progress have been made more robust and procedures, such as the close tracking of students' progress, are now developing, although their full impact awaits evaluation. Parents discuss progress of their children and curriculum options through termly meetings. This is raising the aspirations of parents and encouraging students to participate in courses related to the college's specialism and work-related learning.

The college is inclusive and provides equal opportunities for all students. Opportunities for community cohesion are satisfactory. Students have good opportunities to be involved in the life of the college and local community. Whilst some links have been made with other countries, pen pals in Japan and raising funds for Africa, links with other countries and areas of Great Britain are not yet sufficiently developed.

Students have access to a wide range of extended college clubs, which they say are valued and well attended. Members of the wider community are actively involved with the college. These include the newly developing facilities on site for Sure Start, for the youngest members and older people who have been actively involved in humanity lessons, working along side students sharing their history.

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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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Fyndoune Community College, Durham, DH7 6LU

On behalf of the inspection team, I would very much like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited the college. This is what we thought about your college.

- Fyndoune Community College is a satisfactory college. The new leadership team, governors and senior managers are working hard together to make improvements.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and the proportion of good teaching is increasing.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of courses and extra activities.
- Your behaviour is improving in lessons and around the college.
- You are well cared for by the staff and you look after one another.
- The college has been active in promoting healthy lifestyles. Many of you enjoy the healthier food options available at the college canteen and take part in the wide range of sports on offer at the college.

Your teachers and the staff work hard and want to make the college even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they would:

- ensure that you make better progress, particularly in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4
- improve the quality of teaching to provide a range of challenging activities and encourage you to learn more independently
- further promote good behaviour in lessons and around college and to ensure that all of you are fully involved in the work of the college.

You can help your college by further improving your behaviour, listening carefully in lessons and working closely with the staff on all subjects but in particular your English and mathematics.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Colquhoun, AI

Lead inspector