

# Longbenton Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108645
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	331285
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Straw

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1060
Sixth form	137
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tim Goodwin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr James Cockburn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Hailsham Avenue Longbenton Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE12 8ER
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2007474
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2007850

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Longbenton Community College is a slightly larger than average secondary school serving the east side of Newcastle upon Tyne. The school is situated in an area of considerable social deprivation. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is higher than average. A below average proportion of students has learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the number of students with a statement of special educational need is just above average. The majority of students are from a White British heritage. There is a sixth form run in collaboration with two other schools. The college has held technology specialist status since 1998. The buildings are well worn and work on constructing a new building will begin in 2011. At the last inspection in March 2008 the college was given a notice to improve.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Under the inspiring and visionary leadership of the headteacher, this is a good school with some outstanding features. The college reacted rapidly and efficiently to issues raised at the last inspection and has addressed all these fully. Standards are rising at both key stages, the curriculum is increasingly flexible to the needs of individual students and highly effective monitoring of all aspects of the college's work ensures that the leadership has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses. Statutory requirements for safeguarding meet, and exceed, government requirements. There is a strong, shared vision for improvement and a determination to go from strength to strength.

Standards are in line with the national average and rising, and students' achievement from Year 7 to Year 11 is good. The college monitors the progress of all students well and can show that girls and boys, students from different backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all make good progress from their starting points. Standards are above average in mathematics and rising in English and science.

Almost all aspects of students' personal development are good, including their attitudes to learning; this makes a significant contribution to their successful achievement. Students say that they enjoy school because 'there is something for everyone'. Attendance is rising and is now just above the national average. Behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding in lessons. Students show respect for each other and their physical environment. There is an enthusiastic commitment to all that is on offer. Students feel valued, cared for and safe. The college is working towards Healthy School status and students are responding to the good advice they receive on healthy eating and living. Students contribute to their local community through initiatives such as the community fair. They are consulted on all matters relating to their life in school. Recently, they have participated in curriculum development and contributed their ideas about the new building. Students benefit from work experience and enterprise activities; for example, a small group of students established a sustainable enterprise group selling organic flowers and vegetables and this has now expanded to them selling eco-friendly shopping bags. Their good personal development and improving academic standards prepare them well for the future.

These good outcomes for students are the result of the college's effective provision. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes outstanding. Classroom practice is strong, with teachers employing a wide range of creative strategies to ensure students are involved, interested and making good progress. Marking and assessment are not always as strong. Some teachers accept work too readily which is poorly presented and the quality of feedback is sometimes inconsistent, in lessons and in marking, to help students take the next steps in learning. The college is developing a flexible and creative curriculum, responsive to the needs of individuals. The benefits of many years of technology specialist status are reflected in all aspects of the college's work. The college is leading on the development of the North Tyneside learning platform across the local authority. The students make a good contribution to the local community. Pastoral care and support is outstanding. Students thrive in the nurturing and stimulating environment. Students who have difficulty in adjusting to, and accepting, school receive outstanding support

in the Farne Centre. The college tracks the progress of all students effectively and sets targets from the start of Year 7 to monitor and accelerate progress.

The large majority of parents praise the work of the college, in particular the teaching and the support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The views of many are summed up by one parent who wrote, 'staff are highly motivated and work very hard to achieve the best for each pupil'.

Collaborative leadership is strong across the college and all teachers, support assistants and administration staff are involved in evaluating and improving the quality of what the college offers. Governors are highly committed to the college, proud of its achievements and ambitious for even greater improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The sixth form is rapidly increasing in size and the great majority of students continue into the second year. The curriculum is good. In collaboration with two other schools, a wide programme of General Certificate of Education (GCE) courses is offered at AS level and A2 level. This is supplemented by very popular and successful vocational advanced level courses. The curriculum is being broadened to include further vocational courses, some at lower levels. Over 90% of students successfully complete the courses they have started. In the main, standards are average and achievement is good. Data show an upward trend over a substantial time period. Some students start from a low base at GCSE. A significant number of students have done well despite difficult personal circumstances. Achievement in some subjects is very high; for instance, the large numbers of students following courses in English, information and communication technology (ICT) and business do particularly well. Where courses have occasionally been less successful, the college is dexterous in identifying causes and remedying problems.

Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students are provided with varied activities that are well matched to their needs and the topics in hand. They say that they are suitably challenged to think for themselves, and this was seen in lessons. Their ongoing personal development is therefore promoted well. Students are self-confident and have ambitious aspirations. They enjoy the sixth form. Students feel that they are well looked after and supported, for instance, in considering whether to re-sit examinations, and in preparing applications for universities. They appreciate the opportunity to take responsibility for the welfare of younger students and to participate in a diverse range of additional activities. The sixth form is well led and managed; morale is strong and quality assurance is effective.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the consistency of the quality of feedback students receive both in lessons and marking to help to identify the next steps in learning.
- Raise the standard of the presentation of students' work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are broadly average and achievement is good. The proportion of students obtaining five GCSEs with A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has been consistently close to national averages over a number of years. Students make good progress from Year 7 to Year

11. The progress made in 2008 in English, mathematics, business studies and product design was particularly strong. Significantly higher proportions of students than expected achieved both A\* to C grades and the highest A\*/A grades. Both girls and boys of all abilities make good progress. Thoughtful consideration and provision for the learning needs of disadvantaged students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensures they make good progress across a range of personal and academic endeavour.

Progress made by both girls and boys during Key Stage 3 is good. The traditional model of Key Stage 3 is changing and many talented students are now studying GCSE subjects from Year 8. High standards and excellent progress were seen in these lessons, in particular in mathematics and English. Very close and careful monitoring of students' progress in Year 11, together with unvalidated modular examination results, means that the college is confident that standards in external examinations are set to rise above national averages. The standards reached and the progress seen in lessons by inspectors confirms this view.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Students eagerly grasp the opportunities to extend their understanding of the world around them through a wide range of experiences provided across the curriculum. These include the use of the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' project, an appreciation of art and food from different cultures to be found in art and technology lessons and the dialogue with students from different religions.

Most students say that they enjoy coming to school. They feel safe in school, knowing who to turn to in the event of them needing support. They report that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they happen, they are managed effectively. Relationships between adults and students are positive. This is reflected in an improving attendance rate. Students' enjoyment in Years 7, 8 and 9 is reflected in the high participation rates in a range of extra-curricular activities including sport, Christian Union, science, art and music. These opportunities are enhanced by more novel activities including scrabble and go-karting. However, older students comment on the lack of activities open to them.

Students are encouraged to lead healthy lives and to reflect on the choices available to them. They listen to, and take some note of, the good advice on offer from school. Students appreciate the fact that their views are taken into account. They are being consulted, for example, over the new school build. Students engage enthusiastically in various charitable works including raising funds to provide educational resources for children in Kenya and Zambia as well as support for local charities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Students' behaviour is good and often excellent; they respond very well to teachers' high expectations. A hallmark of all lessons is the mutual respect and willingness of students to work productively with each other and their teachers. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan a varied range of suitable activities in lessons. ICT and other

resources are used effectively to enhance students' learning by developing their independence and increasing the pace of learning.

Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. Where learning is most successful, students are encouraged to think independently and become active learners because they have the opportunity 'to learn by doing'. In such lessons, there is brisk pace and good challenge, and activities are well matched to the range of abilities in the class.

Guidance given to students on how to improve their work is inconsistent. Good and outstanding guidance is evident in students' books, but some marking neither gives advice nor sets targets, so that students are not always supported to improve. When assessing students' work, some teachers focus on the examination grades that students should aim for rather than explain what aspects of the subject they need to learn next. Students are alert and attentive in class but some produce written work which is presented poorly and incomplete.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good; it meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students well. The range of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 is increasing. The introduction of accelerated studies for more able students in Years 7 and 8 has fostered high achievement and students who have benefited are now making strong headway towards GCSE. Innovative approaches to intervention with basic skills and early entry for GCSE are well considered and productive. Alternative provision away from school provides well for those who find it difficult to cope with a mainstream curriculum. Imaginative use is made of days when the normal timetable is suspended to provide focus and challenges, for example, in problem solving and team building activities that reach beyond any one subject. Specialist technology college status is used to good effect in enhancing the quality of provision in subjects related to technology, more widely across the school and in the community that the school serves. A wide range of extra-curricular activities engages Key Stage 3 students well; there is less available for students in Key Stage 4. Provision for careers education is well established. Students speak positively of the support they receive when it comes to post-16 opportunities and that received from the Connexions service, for example.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care for all students and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Students joining the school settle very quickly as a result of very strong links with the primary schools. The school's nurturing ethos underpins students' enjoyment of learning and promotes their good progress and achievements. Many parents of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities wrote in praise of the support their children receive, summed up by one who said, 'Teachers have made great efforts to support my son in his learning needs and encourage his desire to learn'. The needs of these students are met through a personalised and tailored curriculum to ensure they achieve success academically, socially and emotionally and are fully involved in the life of the school.

The positive effect of the college's monitoring procedures on improving attendance is reflected in a steadily improving figure that is now just above national averages. Fixed and permanent exclusion rates have fallen as a result of the school's behavioural support programme including the outstanding Farne Centre which offers students the opportunity to reflect on their

misdeemeanours. Students rightly comment positively on the outstanding system of peer mentoring which is recognised by students as helping to ensure that incidents of inappropriate behaviour such as bullying are rare and managed effectively. Statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and child protection procedures are followed robustly. A strong system of target-setting is in place and students' progress is tracked effectively throughout their time in school. However, the daily guidance students receive about their work through marking and assessment and how to take the next steps in learning is inconsistent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership, management and governance are good. Leadership at all levels has ensured that the school has made good improvement over time and since the last inspection. The headteacher's excellent vision and very good leadership have ensured that the school has moved forward well on a number of fronts. The school's relentless focus on raising standards and achievement has been supported well by staff at all levels and standards continue to rise. The senior leadership team provides expert guidance and support for the school's improvement. Staff commitment and dedication ensure that all students are included and enjoy success in and out of the classroom. The college provides a focal point in the local community. Hundreds of adults are enrolled on adult education courses and many local people use the sports facilities. The contribution made to community cohesion is satisfactory. The college contributes well to the local community through numerous events such as the community fair and music and drama events. Plans are in place to develop a wider range of national and international links. Governors have extensive knowledge of the school. They are fully supportive, well informed and prepared to challenge and defend the school. Governors recently achieved the financial standard mark and the college provides good value for money. Given its rapid improvement since the last inspection, the college is well placed to continue to improve.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
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	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	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 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Longbenton Community College, North Tyneside, NE12 8ER

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome when we inspected your college last week. We very much enjoyed meeting and talking to so many of you and hearing your views. This letter is to report our findings to you.

We agree with you that Longbenton is a good school which provides well for you. You make good progress overall and standards are rising. Your behaviour is good and in some lessons it is excellent. You told us that most lessons are engaging and we saw good, and some outstanding teaching. The curriculum gives you many choices and we saw how all students, from the most able to those who need extra help, are well supported. You told us that you thought the Farne Centre was excellent and that the peer mentoring system works well. We agree with you entirely. All the staff take good care of you and track your progress to try to make sure you achieve as well as you can. You told us that you feel safe, take advantage of good advice on healthy lifestyles and are consulted about a wide range of matters affecting you in school.

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the college is well led and managed because everyone is consulted and ambitious for improvement and progress.

We have asked the school to look at two areas to improve further. Some teachers need to give more advice on how you can improve your work to reach the next stage in learning. We think that some of you can improve the quality of the presentation of your work.

We wish you all good luck in the future,

Yours faithfully

Judith Straw, on behalf of the inspection team.

Lead inspector