

Walbottle Campus

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108524
Local Authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	337098
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Farrow 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1670
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeremy Paterson
Headteacher	Mr Paul Sampson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 30 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the work of the school and looked at a selection of documentation such as school and departmental improvement plans, procedures for safeguarding students and a range of policies. They analysed the school's teacher assessments and examination results and the most recent attendance and exclusion data. Inspectors also reviewed a number of case files that illustrated how the school works in partnership with parents and other agencies to support vulnerable students. The responses of 578 parents and carers to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire were analysed. Inspectors also considered responses from 65 staff and a sample of over 200 student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Current standards and progress of students across the school.
- The impact of teaching on students learning and progress.
- The impact of the leadership and management of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, staff and governors.
- The impact of the school's work on students' achievement and well-being.

Information about the school

Walbottle is a much larger-than-average, newly built, secondary school. The proportion of students from ethnic minority communities is well below that found nationally although it has increased over the past three years. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average, but increasing. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally, whilst the proportion of these students with a statement of special educational need is well-below the national average. There are proportionately more students identified with special educational needs in younger year groups. The school first attained specialist technology college status in 1995 and is a member of the Specialist College Trust. It has gained a number of nationally recognised awards such as: Investors in People, Specialist School and Academies Trust inclusion Award and more recently the national ECO award. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Walbottle is a satisfactory and improving school. Strengths include the good actions taken to safeguard students and the support, care and guidance provided for them. These actions together with the strong focus on assuring all students are welcomed and included into the life of the school help to promote students' good behaviour and personal development. Students are polite, friendly and considerate. Although attendance remains lower than that found nationally, it is improving due to the wide range of actions taken and the good partnership with other agencies who together with the school, support families to ensure students to attend more regularly. These actions have also helped to reduce the number of students who are persistently absent.

A determined focus on raising standards has had a positive impact on students' attainment. Although standards have been low since 2005 they have improved rapidly over the past two years. Nevertheless they remain below average in English and mathematics. Provisional results for 2009 indicate that despite a rise of 10 percentage points since 2007, a lower than average proportion of students attained five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English and mathematics. The proportion of students attaining five good GCSEs across all subjects has risen at a faster pace and has been broadly average for the past two years. These results represent students' satisfactory achievement, given their starting points in Year 7. The attainment of students with special educational needs; looked after students and the few students from minority ethnic backgrounds have also improved at a similar rate.

The quality of teaching, including that in the sixth form is satisfactory. Some is good and occasionally outstanding, but it is not consistently good enough to fully tackle the legacy of underachievement or make sure that students always make their best progress in lessons. Satisfactory lessons lack challenge and there is too much teacher talk, restricting students' opportunities for independent learning, sharing ideas or for challenging their own thinking. The assessment information the school holds about students' progress is not always used well enough in lessons to match teaching to students' current levels of understanding. The use and quality of marking to help students know how well they are doing and what they need to do next is variable.

The school's status for specialism in technology has a satisfactory impact on the work of the school, the community and students' achievements. It is evident in the opportunity that Year 9 students have to make an early choice of a design technology exam course and, as a result, aspects of this subject perform well. Some but not all specialist subject targets are met.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory. The new headteacher

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has quickly galvanised staff and governors on a shared quest for continued improvement. Staff are well-motivated and supported and are ambitious for the school's success. All have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. These priorities have been translated into clear action plans. The recently improved use of challenging targets is starting to accelerate the pace of learning. Recently revised systems for tracking students' progress and procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and disseminating good practice have yet to lift students' learning and progress from satisfactory to good. Although a thorough cycle of monitoring and review has been developed it lacks rigour and consistency.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively, including updating safeguarding and child protection procedures in the light of recent legislation. Given the improvements in students' attainment and attendance, their satisfactory progress, the determined leadership and strong focus on improvement from the whole school community, the school has satisfactory capacity to sustain its improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the challenge provided to all students in lessons so that:
 - teachers' use of open ended questions leads to classroom discussion of work
 - there are more opportunities for students' self and peer-evaluation of their work to develop their analytical and critical skills
 - students are encouraged to present their work or justify their views and ideas to the whole class or groups in order to build self-confidence and develop speaking skills.
- Ensure that the assessment of students' work is used consistently and well across all subjects particularly English and mathematics, so that:
 - teachers always have high expectations of students
 - this information is always used to structure learning activities through lesson planning which is demanding of all groups, helping students to make the best possible progress in their lessons
 - marking always informs students of what they have to improve.
- Ensure the leadership team's monitoring and review strategies within plans for improvement:
 - include agreed milestones and measurable success criteria
 - include subsequent actions if success criteria are not met and use these to inform future priorities in improvement planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Inspection evidence and the headteacher's lesson observations show that students' attainment in most lessons is average and they make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning. Students who are vulnerable, those with special educational

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needs and/or disabilities and looked after students make similar progress to their peers because of the effective support and care provided to them by staff. Senior leaders are aware that girls' progress in mathematics slows after Key Stage 3 and they are taking decisive action to tackle this variation.

The vast majority of parents and students responding to the inspection questionnaires agree that students are safe and enjoy school. A few parents and students who responded believe that bullying and behaviour are issues. Students who spoke to inspectors say behaviour is good and although bullying occasionally takes place, it is tackled quickly once staff are informed. They say how much they like the 'fantastic' reward system and an increasing number are eager to come to school, correctly equipped and ready to work. Students who have difficulty settling in classes are supported in smaller groups when necessary. Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives. Their physical and emotional well being is particularly well promoted through the curriculum, good pastoral care and ready access to the school nurse and counseling services when required. The school council speaks enthusiastically about their influence on decision making in school and their involvement in the Youth Parliament. Students make an effective contribution to the life of the school, but senior leaders are aware that opportunities for all students to contribute to the wider community are more limited.

Students have a secure understanding of the routes open to them when choosing options in Year 9 and when making career and post-16 course decisions. Effective work-based learning, enterprise opportunities and links with local businesses are increasing students' understanding of business and economic issues. These actions together with students' improving attendance and basic skills are preparing them satisfactorily for their world beyond school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Students arrive punctually to all lessons and behave well. Where students learn well, teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge are the norm. Teaching is pacy; students are enthusiastic, well motivated and display high levels of concentration. Teaching challenges students and on occasions, encourages them to work independently and formulate and discuss their own ideas. In such lessons, teachers match success criteria for their lessons to the different abilities in class so all make good progress in their learning. However this is not always the case and in satisfactory lessons some students are not challenged enough while others lose interest when taught concepts that are above their current level of understanding.

The school has widened the satisfactory curriculum to better meet individual needs and interests; particularly for boys. For example, through the provision of vocational courses such as construction and engineering and this is making a positive difference to their enjoyment and achievement. Senior leaders are aware that more needs to be done to interest girls in Year 9 and Year 10 whose attendance rates are not as good as others, and they are taking action to improve matters. Good actions are taken to help students at risk of being excluded or disaffected with school to access alternative curriculum routes so that they can continue to learn and attain accredited qualifications. The Learning Development Centres provide temporary havens for those with significant learning or behavioural needs and enables these students to access their curriculum and to build their confidence to return to whole-class lessons. Consequently the numbers of fixed term exclusions are low and few students are permanently excluded. The curriculum is enriched well by a range of extra-curricular activities in which high proportions of students regularly take part and say they enjoy.

The school prides itself on the good support, care and guidance offered to students and every effort is taken to enable students to make the most of their time at school. As well as the strong pastoral support provided, the school has developed good and wide ranging partnerships with agencies such as health, the police, education welfare, and local authority children's services in order to quickly secure additional help and guidance for students and their families in times of acute crisis.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Walbottle is a harmonious school community; the new school provides an inviting, calm and orderly environment. Staff and students show respect and tolerance for each other and the school is strongly committed to tackling any discrimination to ensure equal opportunities for all. For example, the past underachievement of specific groups of students is being tackled rigorously. Inspection evidence and the school's assessments show that they are now making the same progress as others.

The safety and well-being of students are paramount and there are strong and clear management responsibilities regarding child protection. Students are certain that they know who to approach if they have a concern or a complaint. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Students have a thorough understanding of their own community. Their involvement in the European schools' Comenius programme and their recent award as an Eco school promotes students' understanding of international communities. However opportunities to understand the more diverse communities across Britain are less well developed.

Parents' and carers' responses to school and the inspection questionnaires indicate partnerships with parents are good and the vast majority are positive about the school's work. They are kept well-informed about their children's progress and well-being. Governors report that there is a much more positive view of the school in the local community. One parent summed this up eloquently in the inspection questionnaire, noting, 'Walbottle Campus has improved dramatically over the past few years, both educationally and concerning behaviour'. Alongside the successful partnerships with agencies to support the most vulnerable students, partnerships with other agencies to promote students learning and well-being are also good. These include strong links with local primary schools, well-attended family learning courses and good work with the Education Business Partnership which has helped to increase the range of vocational courses available to students.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress in their learning and attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 13. However there is variation across subjects and the attendance of some students has an adverse impact on their learning. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In lessons, students show a keenness to learn and a desire to do well. Teachers are clear about course requirements and what students need to learn. They plan lessons that enable students to steadily gain the prescribed knowledge and skills. Sometimes students lack confidence and do not demonstrate high levels of independence because there are too few opportunities to promote or develop these skills in lessons. However some opportunities are provided for them to develop cooperative skills and independence through activities such as a residential visit to a local university. Nevertheless, students develop a good range of personal skills; their behaviour is excellent and they establish positive and successful relationships with each other and staff. Students say they enjoy school and appreciate the opportunities afforded to them. They particularly value the fact that staff are approachable in relation to any queries they have about their work. Students' contribution to the life of the whole school is less well developed and there are fewer opportunities for them to develop their physical health than in the lower school.

An increasingly broad range of academic and vocational courses are provided and students receive helpful guidance on course-choice on entry into the sixth form and about post-school options, including entry into higher education. As a result, greater numbers of students are entering the sixth form and continuing their education to the end of Year 13. This is providing a route into higher education for some students who might not otherwise attend university. The satisfactory leadership and management of the sixth form enable the sixth form to run efficiently and ensure students make satisfactory progress. Systems to improve aspects of provision further have been put in place but have yet to demonstrate an impact on student outcomes.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the quality of education and care their children receive and inspectors agree. Over 10% wrote additional positive comments. A slightly smaller proportion made more negative comments and some of these have been referred to above. The headteacher was made aware of parents' concerns and the small number of students' concerns when it would not breach the confidentiality of either. He is taking steps to tackle any issues arising.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Walbottle Campus to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 578 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1670 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	229	40	315	54	25	4	9	2
The school keeps my child safe	241	42	324	56	9	2	4	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	333	58	229	40	10	2	2	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	253	45	290	52	17	3	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	225	40	321	57	10	2	7	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	200	35	342	60	20	4	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	159	28	371	66	28	5	5	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	222	41	303	56	15	3	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	216	39	318	57	18	3	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	226	41	291	53	28	5	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	205	38	319	59	13	2	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	237	42	308	55	13	2	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	277	49	271	48	12	2	7	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 October 2009

Dear students

Inspection of Walbottle Campus, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 9TP

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we inspected your school recently, especially those of you who spoke to us at lunchtime and during lessons. We have considered carefully your comments and those of your parents who completed the inspection questionnaires. Walbottle is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features, such as the actions taken to safeguard you and the care, guidance and support you receive. Standards are improving rapidly and although they are still sometimes low in comparison to schools nationally, you are now making satisfactory progress in your learning from the time you enter school in Year 7 to the time you leave in Year 11. Although some parents and a few of you believe that bullying is a problem, those of you who spoke to us said that whilst it does occasionally occur, any incidents are quickly dealt with. Some parents think your behaviour is an issue but we saw only good behaviour wherever we went. The head teacher was concerned about the few of you who said you felt less safe and is going to do some work to get to the bottom of your concerns.

You say you enjoy the good range of sporting and out-of school activities and these are helping you to have a good understanding of how to be healthy. However although attendance rates are improving and the school is working hard to continue to improve them, too many of you are still not attending school, particularly some in the sixth form and girls in Years 9 and 10. This is impacting on your achievements.

In order to help the school to improve further we have asked the school to:

- make sure all lessons are interesting and challenging, providing opportunities for you to develop ideas, present your views and evaluate your work
- ensure all teachers use the school's accurate assessment information when planning lessons so that work is always matched to your learning needs
- make sure marking always helps you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve
- monitor and review the actions set out in school improvement plans rigorously, to make sure actions taken are making a difference to your achievements.

Thank you again and on behalf of the inspection team, please accept our very best

wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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