

Seaton Burn College, A Specialist Business and Enterprise School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108647
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	337114
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Tom Grieveson 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	700
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Muriel Green
Principal	Ms Alison Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, and held meetings with the college principal, senior and middle leaders, governors, members of staff, groups of students and a representative from the local authority (LA). Inspectors observed the college's work and looked at a range of documentation including performance information, internal monitoring reports and governors' minutes. A sample of students' work was also scrutinised along with 131 parental questionnaires and the sample of student questionnaires submitted by the college.

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

- How effectively the college identifies those students who under-achieve and uses this evidence to intervene to effect improvement.
- How teachers and other staff use the college's assessment and tracking evidence when planning lessons so that the needs of all students are consistently met ensuring they make progress commensurate with their capabilities and starting points.
- How effectively the curriculum (including in the sixth form) meets the needs and aspirations of all students.
- How effectively senior leaders monitor the college's performance so that weaknesses can be identified and steps taken to secure improvement.

Information about the school

The college is situated in a semi-rural location serving a number of dispersed former mining villages. It is situated close to the local authority boundary with both Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumberland to the east of the A1. Demographic changes in the local area have resulted in a declining student roll. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average although numbers are rising. Students are almost exclusively White British. There is a higher than average percentage of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion has increased since 2007. The college has a specialism in business and enterprise and achieved full service extended status in 2008. Sixth-form provision is offered in collaboration with other providers including two neighbouring secondary schools. The college's buildings are due for replacement within the government's Building Schools for the Future programme.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards which students attain and the progress which they make in their learning.

There have been significant personnel changes to the senior and middle leadership teams since the time of the previous inspection and a number of new teachers have also joined the college. As the capacity of these teams has developed, targeted actions have started to bring about sustainable developments in various aspects of the college's provision. This has resulted, for instance, in improvements to teaching and learning and to the curriculum. In addition, improved use of assessment information used to track students' performance has led to underachieving students being identified and offered well targeted help to improve. The impact of these interventions can be seen in better outcomes for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and in boys' GCSE examination results in 2009.

Nonetheless, the standards attained by students and the progress made by the majority have been significantly below average over time and continue to be very low. Despite the welcome improvement in the 2009 GCSE outcomes overall, girls' performance dipped markedly compared to 2008 and the college's own assessments at Key Stage 3 show a significant fall in standards compared to the previous year. Furthermore, while the college provides teachers with access to performance information about students' prior achievement, this is not consistently used when lessons are being planned. Consequently, in too many lessons seen during the inspection, the needs of all students were not sufficiently catered for and this limited the progress of many, despite their capability.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in all subjects and particularly those which are under-performing.
- Accelerate the progress made by all groups of students.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, paying particular attention to the way in which teachers use assessment information when planning lessons so that the needs of all students are met and they make progress commensurate with their capabilities and starting points.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The majority of students demonstrate positive attitudes to their work, respond well to instructions and engage willingly with their peers when sharing in cooperative tasks. However, teachers do not take sufficient account of assessment information when learning is being planned and consequently the tasks set do not meet the needs of all students as well as they should. This is a limiting factor in students' achievement.

Students' attainment on entry to the college is broadly average although this has declined slightly in the last three years. Standards attained by the end of Key Stage 4 have been significantly below average since the time of the previous inspection and students' achievement has been inadequate. In 2008, 46% of students attained five or more good GCSE grades. When English and mathematics are included in this measure, however, pass rates declined to 35%. While girls' attainment was broadly in line with the national average in 2008, the performance of boys at this measure was particularly weak and below the national floor target set by government at 26% of students achieving 5 or more good GCSE passes that include English and mathematics.

Provisional GCSE results for 2009 confirm an improvement in results overall with 50% of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades, and 40% achieving this level when English and mathematics are included. Boys improved their performance well but there was a marked decline in girls' scores. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because their needs are well known and they receive effective and timely support.

The majority of students questioned said that they felt safe in college and consider that behaviour has improved. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and students know who to turn to if problems arise. They express confidence that staff will deal promptly with any matters which occur. The college makes satisfactory efforts to encourage healthy lifestyles. There has been a strong increase in the number of students taking a college meal, for example. Participation rates in sporting activities, including the large number held beyond the teaching day, are good. Students are consulted regularly about their views and the college takes due note of these and acts upon them. Students engage well with the community including representation on the local community forum and the North Tyneside Youth Forum. The college has worked successfully to reduce absence rates so that attendance is now broadly average. In addition, the rate of persistent non-attendance has been halved through some very effective intervention work. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and is reflected in the positive behaviour and caring attitudes shown by the large majority. They understand the difference between right and wrong and demonstrate concern and care for others.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Some teaching is good and is evident mainly in classes of students of average or classes with more able students whereas satisfactory teaching was observed most often in the lower ability sets. A small number of unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In these lessons the management of student behaviour was weak and the low level disruption caused by a minority of students was allowed to disrupt the learning of the others.

Almost all teachers have secure subject knowledge. In the best lessons, this is used successfully to plan interesting activities and students responded positively. For example some science work on close observation and deduction took the form of a crime scene style investigation which engaged the students and sustained their interest. The good choice of texts in Year 8 English lessons captured students' attention and they were keen to continue reading beyond the end of the lesson. Teachers used these texts skilfully to develop the skills of inference and deduction and to introduce students to strategies used by authors to keep the readers' attention such as 'cliff-hangers' and 'foreshadowing'. In too many of the satisfactory lessons, however, teachers did not identify or correct students' misunderstandings of what was being learned and this hampered their understanding of the lessons' content and limited their progress. In addition, while all staff have access to the college's assessment information, this is not used well enough to plan lessons so that activities fully take account of the varying learning needs of students in each class. This results in work being too demanding or lacking challenge for many students and is limiting the progress of which many are capable.

The curriculum is well organised and offers students an increasing range of opportunities to extend their learning and to meet their needs and aspirations. This includes an appropriate balance of academic and vocational options and this range of subjects is enhanced well through the college's specialism, which is making an increasingly strong contribution to students' outcomes with information and communication technology (ICT) being a particularly strong performer. The college enjoys a successful collaboration with neighbouring high schools, North Tyneside College, training agencies and various work placements. This now extends to offering access to national diplomas in four subject areas. The provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is meeting their needs effectively. In addition, the range of options offered through the curriculum is making an increasingly positive contribution to increasing attendance and reducing the number of persistent non-attenders. Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular provision, mainly sporting, but also including dance and local history.

Support for new entrants to the college is good and well managed. This extends to effective support and guidance for students when selecting GCSE courses and options for post-16 study, and is helping improve retention rates in the sixth form. The integrated support team offer effective support to vulnerable students and their care is well managed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal, senior staff and governors have ensured there is a clear ambition for the college focused on improving the quality of provision and raising standards. Much has been done to improve the skills of senior and middle leaders since the last inspection. Consequently, senior staff demonstrate an accurate understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and actions to improve its performance are well targeted. There is clear evidence of the impact of their work in important areas such as teaching and learning, the curriculum and the use of student performance information to identify under-achievement and trigger intervention to support improvement.

Senior leaders and managers accurately monitor the quality of teaching and learning and there is substantial evidence that this has been a major improvement priority. Significant professional development has taken place which has enhanced the quality of teaching since the time of the last inspection. However, it has not improved to the point

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

where the significant legacy of underachievement has been overcome because too much teaching is satisfactory. Furthermore, the college does not yet analyse information from the monitoring of teaching sufficiently well to evaluate the quality of learning for different groups of students.

The governing body is rigorous in ensuring the safety of students and staff. They show a clear awareness of the college's strengths and weaknesses and have developed appropriate monitoring systems to track its progress. Governors work closely with the college's senior leaders and offer an appropriate balance of challenge and support. While they greatly respect and appreciate the work of senior staff they are thorough in holding them to account.

The college values and acts upon the views of parents. The large majority are supportive of the college's work, value their association with it and consider they are kept well informed about their child's progress. There is extensive collaboration with other providers in delivering the curriculum at both Key Stages 4 and 5. This has enabled the college to expand its offer to students. Other outside agencies are also used to provide professional support and guidance to students at key transition points. The college promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily.

Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and are robustly maintained. The effectiveness with which the college promotes community cohesion is satisfactory.

Senior leaders have an informed understanding of the context of the college and have taken a range of relevant actions to contribute to community cohesion at a local level.

The college is working productively with other agencies; it has well-established international links but recognises that it needs to do more to ensure that students have a greater range of opportunities locally to meet with people from other religions and minority ethnic communities. Furthermore, the college is not systematically evaluating the impact of its work in this area.

While the principal and governors have worked diligently to secure a more efficient use of resources and to tackle longstanding budgetary and staffing problems, the college provides inadequate value for money because the standards students attain and the progress being made by the majority are inadequate.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with broadly average levels of attainment. The majority make satisfactory progress throughout Years 12 and 13 and leave having attained standards which are in line with those seen nationally. Girls have outperformed boys, but the gap is narrowing through effective targeted intervention which has raised boys' attainment.

Sixth-form leadership offers a clear vision for improvement and receives strong support from the senior team. Aspirational targets for the students have been established with areas for improvement accurately identified. Evidence of impact is shown in the enhanced retention rates and improvements to boys' attainment. An equal proportion of good and satisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. At its best, teachers' engendered lively discussion, independent enquiry was encouraged and skilful questioning challenged students' knowledge and thinking. Where it was satisfactory, insufficient account was taken of students' prior learning, their interests or abilities and learning became mundane and lacked excitement.

The students are mature, confident, articulate and are at ease working independently or with others. There is a strong sense of community in the sixth form. In addition, students take opportunities to support younger students through peer mentoring, the student council and by helping in other classes and in local primary schools. They value the collaborative sixth-form provision and have made positive relationships with students in other schools.

Students feel safe and secure both in the building and in the arrangements made for them to move between partner sites. The head of sixth form meets regularly with students where pertinent issues can be raised. Parents are involved in the reviews of progress and are immediately engaged should any student fall behind with their work or if their attendance deteriorates. Students consider that the guidance they were given on entry to the sixth form was clear and helpful.

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

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

Parents' inspection survey returns reflect an overwhelmingly positive response, with good support for the college. Parents commented most strongly on how much their children enjoyed college life, their confidence in the college's safety routines, how they are kept informed of their child's progress and their confidence in the college's leadership. A minority of parents expressed concerns that the college does not do enough to help them to support their child's learning or to support students to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Seaton Burn College, A Specialist Business and Enterprise School 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 131 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 700 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	25	80	63	7	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	33	26	90	71	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	23	87	69	3	2	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	18	90	71	7	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	23	18	88	70	7	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	12	90	71	15	12	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	9	90	71	13	10	2	2
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)	21	17	88	70	7	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	19	89	71	7	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	23	77	61	12	10	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	13	78	62	11	9	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	32	25	77	61	7	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	26	75	60	8	6	1	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.



Inspection of Seaton Burn Community College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE13 6EJ

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for the manner in which you welcomed us to the college and particularly to those students who met with us and shared their views of the college and what it offers. The report is now complete and I would like to share our findings with you.

The principal, governors and staff have worked very hard to improve the college since the time it was last inspected in 2006. We were particularly pleased to see improvements in the quality of leadership and management, in teaching and learning, in the expanding curriculum and the way in which staff monitor your progress and support those students who require additional help. These aspects of the college's work are satisfactory and demonstrate that the basis has been laid to make further improvements in the future. All aspects of the work of the sixth form are also satisfactory. You told us that you feel safe and that staff are available when you need help. It was good to observe how behaviour has improved around the college and in lessons, although we did observe a few instances of poor behaviour. We were impressed by the higher take up of college meals and your knowledge of how to keep healthy.

Despite these improvements, however, the standards being attained by the end of Key Stage 4 are still too low and not enough students are achieving as well as they should. The 2009 GCSE results do show some improvement and boys did well compared to previous years but there is still much to achieve. Therefore, we have given the college a Notice to Improve. This means that the college will be inspected again in about 12 to 18 months time and an inspector will visit in the intervening period to check on the progress being made.

We have asked Ms Shaw, the governors and the staff to make improvements in the following areas.

- To raise standards in all subjects and particularly in those subjects which are not performing as well as they should.
- To ensure that all students make better progress in their learning so that you all achieve as well as you should.
- To improve the quality of teaching and learning and to make sure that all teachers use the assessment information which they have about you so that in all lessons, all of the time, you undertake activities which meet your needs.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection and to those of you who completed the student questionnaire. We have taken very careful account of your views in completing this report.

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