

Prudhoe Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122351
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340131
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	780
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Burt
Headteacher	Dr Iain Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. In the course of the inspection, 28 lessons were observed and 27 teachers and one higher level teaching assistant were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, staff and one parent. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents relating to the safeguarding of students, the school improvement plan, school attainment and tracking data, school records relating to the care of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and vulnerable students. They also analysed the questionnaires returned by students, staff and 292 parents.

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

- Whether the school is eradicating variations in achievement between different groups of students.
- Whether the recent rise in attainment in English and mathematics is sustainable.
- How well is the curriculum meeting the needs of different groups of students and ensuring their future economic well-being?
- How effectively is new leadership identifying and tackling areas for improvement?

Information about the school

The school is a smaller-than-average secondary school. Students are from predominantly White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average; so too is the percentage of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including a statement of special educational needs. The school holds specialist status for technology. It is a partner in the Tynedale Virtual College and has numerous links with other schools and colleges. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy School status.

Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone significant changes to staffing as a result of a demographic decline in the community. This has led to considerable, and unavoidable, staffing reduction, which has had a significant impact on staff morale. Staff changes have also played a part in the challenges the school has faced, especially with regard to maintaining a curriculum designed to meet the needs of all students.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school, which has improved examination performance in Year 11 and the sixth form, while successfully managing unavoidable staffing reductions since the previous inspection. In managing the difficult challenges of the past year, while improving attainment, the school has shown it has a good capacity for further improvement. Students' attainment is above average and all groups, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their different starting points. Recent results show a significant rise in the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades in English and mathematics. School tracking data indicates that students in Year 11 are on course to sustain above-average results in these subjects at the end of the year. Results in the sixth form are the best the school has achieved.

Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding. Good subject knowledge and good relationships with students underpin much of the good learning. Where progress is rapid it is because teachers make very good use of their assessment of prior learning to set a good level of challenge that stretches students' thinking. This practice is not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure good learning across the curriculum for all students. The good curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of different groups. The school's specialist subjects enhance learning and promote high standards. Specialist targets have been met or exceeded since the previous inspection. Technology and engineering courses have played a significant role in attracting students from partner schools in the Tynedale Virtual College partnership. Students are exceptionally well cared for and supported. They say that they have high levels of trust in adults and in the school's ability to tackle any concerns effectively. They feel very safe and secure in school and this helps them to develop strong personal qualities of sociability, caring and supportive attitudes, and a willingness to work hard to succeed. Students create a civilised, comfortable atmosphere in the school which helps all to flourish. This is a vibrant school, where students' contribution in and beyond the school is excellent.

Monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders give the school an accurate picture of where it needs to improve. However, action to bring about improvement has not been equally effective in all departments. Some inconsistencies in practice remain which produce variations in performance between subjects that constrain the school's ambition to reach outstanding status. The school agrees with inspectors that there is a need to review and clarify roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders, given the high proportion of new staff this term, and to sharpen monitoring activities so that all staff are held to account for improving the school. Members of the governing body work effectively to support the school in many areas of its work. They do not yet

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sufficiently monitor the work of the school directly to inform themselves at first hand of where the school needs to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve consistency and the overall effectiveness of the school, by:
 - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle managers in monitoring departments, identifying and sharing good practice so that all students benefit from the best teaching and learning practices
 - ensuring that all departments adopt the agreed systems and approaches so that students benefit from consistency of provision and expectation
 - involve the governing body directly in monitoring the work of the school and its progress towards improvement targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment is above average and overall they make good progress from their various starting points. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others because the curriculum is adapted well to meet their needs. There is a trend of rising attainment. Results in 2010 show a further rise in attainment in English and mathematics, with more students gaining grade C or above than in recent years. This is due to the departments' successful response to weaker results by focusing on early identification of students who were at risk of under-achieving. The performance of some subjects is consistently high, including drama, science, technology, physical education and history.

In lessons, students work hard and are keen to learn. Learning is rapid and most effective in lessons where students are expected to think and work independently, following brief, high quality explanations by teachers. In these lessons, students enjoy the challenge of meeting high expectations and the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers. Students' behaviour is good. This creates a positive climate for learning and a friendly, secure atmosphere around the school site, so that students feel very safe when moving from room to room. Students have a strong sense of citizenship, seen clearly in the excellent contribution they make to their own and other communities, both locally and internationally. This helps them to develop into mature and caring young people who are aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the future. Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, of how to stay safe and how assess risks to their well-being; these qualities, together with their good basic skills, prepare them well for the future.

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.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching and learning are good or better, students are motivated and engaged because planning identifies the needs of individuals and groups, and provides appropriate levels of work. Evidence of good planning, which was securely based on accurate assessment of students' learning, was seen across a range of subjects. Teachers' use of assessment to promote good learning is still variable in quality, though improving. Where this is good or better, the rate of learning is brisk because challenges stretch students' thinking without daunting their enthusiasm. Most teachers employ a range of teaching and learning strategies which keep students engaged and allow them to work in a variety of ways. When teaching is satisfactory, students are often passive for too long, have to listen to lengthy explanations and are not motivated to do their best. The skills of teaching assistants are not used to full advantage in all lessons, nor is there always evidence in teachers' planning of what their role is in students' learning.

The curriculum meets the needs of students well. Since the previous inspection the school has developed a wide range of courses to ensure that students of all abilities have pathways to success. The Foundation Learning course has proved very successful in motivating potentially reluctant learners to improve attendance and complete courses. School data show a significant drop in exclusions in this group of students and a rise in their attainment by the time they leave school. Excellent partnerships with local schools and colleges extend the range of subjects on offer so that students can choose from a wide range of academic and skills-based courses. The school's specialism makes a significant contribution to developing innovative approaches to learning and courses which attract students from a number of partner schools. Cross-curricular provision in

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applying basic skills is satisfactory and the school sees this as an area for development in its pursuit of higher standards in English and mathematics. Extra-curricular provision is excellent, with staff giving time to a vast range of clubs, which are highly valued by the many students who enjoy them.

Staff have excellent knowledge of students and their families. Their unflinching commitment to the care of students is highly valued by students and their parents, who have high levels of trust in the school's ability to support and guide them. Highly effective systems ensure that students who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well monitored by staff who are alert to their needs. Pastoral staff make excellent links with external services to provide the best and most appropriate support for individuals. Student welfare managers provide on the spot expert support through an open door policy which enables students to self-refer for help. This is seen by some students as a 'lifeline'. The school is now sharing its excellent multi-agency links with feeder First and Middle schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	<p>1</p>

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have been appropriately focused on raising attainment in English and mathematics since the previous inspection. Increasingly effective use of tracking data has seen a rising trend of performance in English and mathematics and in the overall attainment of students. New senior and middle managers have brought a new perspective and experience to the school which, by complementing existing strengths in leadership, have the potential to accelerate progress and achieve greater consistency in the quality of provision and performance between departments.

Members of the governing body have successfully tackled significant issues of staffing reduction and buildings management since the previous inspection. They ensure that the school adopts good practice for safeguarding students and that equality of opportunity is well promoted. They have been less involved in directly monitoring the work of the school so they have less impact on supporting the school to tackle weaknesses. They have a low profile among staff, some of whom are not clear what their role is or know of the direct, practical support that many governors give to the school. Governors engage well with parents and students; they take note of and act upon their views of the school.

Demographic changes in the local area have led to considerable, and unavoidable,

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staffing reduction, which has had a significant impact on staff morale. Staff changes have also played a part in the challenges the school has faced, especially with regard to maintaining a curriculum designed to meet the needs of all students.

Excellent links with parents and carers ensure they are well informed about and involved in their children's learning. The school knows and serves its own community and others farther afield well and contributes well to community cohesion. Students are well involved at both local and international level in reaching out and giving support. The school is now keen to develop more links within the United Kingdom to extend students' first hand knowledge of the diversity of its society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Outcomes for students are good overall. There has been a rising trend of attainment since the previous inspection and this year's results are above average. Results show that students generally make good progress from their starting points. Sixth form leaders acknowledge a need to reduce differences in performance between subjects and have improvements to the quality of tracking, and monitoring the quality of teaching, as priorities this year. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students are mature, responsible young adults who contribute much to the school and the wider community, which prepares them well for the future. They act as mentors to younger students, organise social events and fund raising and have played a major role in improving the quality and range of food available in the school canteen. Each year a group of sixth form students is elected to the governing body where they further influence the quality of provision in the school.

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Good teaching, based on good subject knowledge and well-planned learning ensures students are motivated and work hard. While some teachers set targets for students and remind them how they can achieve these, this is not consistent practice. Where teachers are not so vigilant about target setting and tracking, learning is not as brisk so progress is slower. The good range of subjects gives students plenty of choice to find the right pathways for their aspirations. Transition to the sixth form is very well planned, with good information about courses and useful induction activities, which help students prepare for independent study. Students say they feel well supported and have high levels of trust in teachers to advise them well. Leadership in the sixth form is good. From this term it is shared by two senior staff, who are keen to improve performance through taking action to improve areas of relative weakness.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They feel that the school keeps their children safe and takes good care of them. Inspectors support these views, but they did make recommendations to the school about some aspect of site management and communicating new systems to parents and carers, which the school accepted. Parents and carers praised the school for many things including, 'very good support for children with learning difficulties' and 'excellent arrangements to prepare my son for joining the school'. Inspectors also support these views, many of which are echoed in the body of the report.

A few parents of older students expressed concerns about the effect of staffing changes on their children's curriculum. These concerns were not echoed by students in their discussion with inspectors. Inspectors acknowledge the school has had to manage unavoidable staff reduction, but judges that this been done in a way to minimise impact on the students' learning given the scale of reductions. A small number of parents and carers also raised concerns about inconsistency in the quality of teaching their children receive, and variations in practice between teachers. Inspectors acknowledge that this can have an impact on the progress that students make overall in their curriculum and have recommended that the school improves consistency and shares the best practice for the benefit of all students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Prudhoe Community High 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 292 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 780 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	94	32	186	64	6	2	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	79	27	193	66	6	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	61	21	183	63	15	5	6	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	29	160	55	14	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	73	25	175	60	11	4	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	20	173	59	27	9	8	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	16	184	63	29	10	6	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)	83	28	167	57	13	4	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	24	179	61	11	4	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	23	165	57	19	7	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	19	157	54	22	8	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	84	29	165	57	11	4	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	100	34	168	58	4	1	5	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



15 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Prudhoe Community High School, Prudhoe, NE42 5LJ

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us to your school during the recent inspection. The inspection team thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. You will be pleased to know that we have judged your school to be good, which means it helps you make good progress and achieve well, both in the main school and in the sixth form.

There are many aspects of your school that are impressive, notably your mature attitudes, good behaviour and sociability. We did note that you remained polite and good humoured despite the awful weather! You benefit from excellent care and support and told us of the confidence you have in all staff to look after you, and how much you appreciate this. You are well taught and enjoy a varied and well-planned curriculum. The amount of extra-curricular activity and school trips are other very impressive aspects of your school. It was good to hear that you make the most of them. Your school prepares you well for the future, in developing your personal skills, independence and your sense of responsibility for others.

Your school has succeeded in maintaining these good standards and provision despite some difficult recent challenges, when unavoidable staffing changes have had to be managed. Senior staff and governors have worked hard to minimise the impact of these, though we understand that some of you are disappointed by changes to your teachers this term, we agree with the school that they were unavoidable. We also have confidence in the school to continue to manage your learning successfully in the future, as it has done in the past.

We have asked the school to make some improvements to monitoring the effect of its changes and improvements so that the good and sometimes outstanding practice in some areas is shared right across the school so that it continues towards its goal of becoming an outstanding school. You are just the people to help it on its way.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector

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