

Norham Community Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108628
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	356397
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Brown 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	570
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Newsham
Headteacher	Mrs Tracy Hush
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Alnwick Avenue North Shields Tyne and Wear NE29 7BU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 31 lessons, saw 29 teachers and held meetings with parents, students, governors, staff and representatives of the local authority. They observed the college's work and looked at a range of documentation including safeguarding procedures, performance information, internal monitoring reports and minutes of the governing body's meetings. A sample of students' work was scrutinised along with 147 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and the sample of questionnaires returned from students and staff submitted by the school.

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

- The sustainability of recent improvements in attainment and progress.
- The effectiveness of assessment and tracking procedures in identifying, and then targeting intervention at, students and groups of students at risk of underachievement.
- How well teachers and other staff use the college's assessment and tracking evidence when planning lessons to meet the needs of all students and ensure that they make good progress in line with their capabilities.
- The effectiveness of the college in tackling the variability in attainment and progress of different groups of students with special educational needs.
- The effectiveness with which the college engages with parents and carers to support their child's learning.
- The provision made for those students most at risk of disaffection.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average secondary school. Most students come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is double the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The college provides for students within North Tyneside who have language and communication difficulties including those on the autistic spectrum. This increases the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs to well above the national average. The college has a specialism in technology and has been a full service extended school since 2008. The college holds many awards from external bodies including Green Flag status, the Healthy Schools Award and the International School Award. It has also been recognised for its work on inclusion. The acting Principal took up her post in April 2010.

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

Norham College provides students with a satisfactory quality of education. Leaders and managers have identified the college's strengths and weaknesses and are bringing about improvement where it is needed, specifically in relation to raising standards. They have prioritised improvement in teaching and learning and linked this to improvements in the accuracy and usefulness of assessment and tracking systems. The full impact of these improvements cannot yet be seen in examination results. Standards remain low overall but have risen during the last three years. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory and increasingly good progress. Provisional results for 2010 indicate that this improvement is continuing with the college achieving its best ever results and exceeding its often challenging targets in several areas. The gap with the national average is closing on all key measures. The college's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although much good and occasionally outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. In the best lessons assessment information is used well to plan lessons that closely meet the identified learning needs of students. This is helping the college to raise attainment in some areas of longstanding underperformance such as reading and mathematics. The curriculum offers a broad range of relevant subjects with pathways that are increasingly well matched to students' needs and interests and provide a good range of accreditation.

The very effective care, guidance and support provided by the college make a major contribution to students' personal development and academic progress. The college has a very diverse mix of students including some with language and communication needs and some with social, emotional and behavioural needs. The attainment and progress of these groups were variable in the past. The college now supports all groups of students well, monitors their progress carefully and intervenes in their learning to give them extra guidance and support when needed. It works effectively with its partners to ensure that a wide range of alternative provision is well targeted to match students' needs and bring about improvements in their attitudes, behaviour, relationships and confidence. A very small number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are at significant risk of disaffection or exhibit challenging behaviour. A programme of flexible schooling has been successful in securing the ongoing engagement of these students but does not always provide an appropriately wide range of learning opportunities and teaching styles. Nevertheless, exclusion figures are low with no permanent exclusions for the past five years and parents and carers have nothing but praise for the college's determined efforts to keep these young people engaged in education.

Students participate in and enjoy many opportunities to contribute to the life of the

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college and the surrounding community. Their attendance has improved but remains broadly average. They feel safe in college, willingly take on a range of responsibilities and behave well. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good but they have limited opportunities to engage with people from different ethnic backgrounds.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment across all subjects, but particularly in English and science, by providing consistently good teaching.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that all teachers are able to use the college's increasingly accurate assessment information effectively to plan and deliver lessons that meet the learning needs of all students.
- Work with its partners, including the local authority, to improve the quality of provision for the very small number of students who are disaffected or who exhibit challenging behaviour by increasing their participation in a broader range of learning opportunities with a greater variety of teaching styles.
- Increase students' opportunities to engage with a range of groups from different ethnic backgrounds not represented in the local community.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the college with below average levels of attainment particularly in reading and literacy. Examination results show that the large majority make satisfactory progress. Between 2007 and 2009 levels of attainment across a range of key measures improved, often at a faster rate than that found nationally, but standards in English and mathematics were slower to do so. However, provisional results for 2010 show that the proportion of students gaining a good GCSE grade in both subjects increased by more than 10% although improvement in English remains slower than that in mathematics. They also show that although some variation remains in the attainment and progress of different groups of students, for example boys and girls, the gaps are closing.

Evidence gathered from lesson observations during the inspection confirms that students are making satisfactory, and often good, progress and that they enjoy their learning. For example, in a technology lesson younger students showed enthusiasm for the task of designing a vanity mirror. They were keen to do well and persevered in order to produce their best work. They used technological terms with increasing confidence and handled equipment safely and sensibly. Most showed pride in the presentation of their work. In a mathematics lesson a group of older students showed good concentration when working on linear equations even when they found aspects of the activity challenging.

Most students develop the wider skills and personal qualities needed to equip them for the next phase of their education or the world of work and training. They approach their

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learning with enthusiasm and positive attitudes and are willing to cooperate with teachers and each other. However, a small number struggle to overcome the barriers that they face because they have weak literacy and numeracy skills. Students' skills in information and communication technology have greatly improved and are now good. Most recognise the next steps they need to take to achieve their vocational goals and the vast majority go on to further education or training. A small number of students have very low attendance levels, although this number is falling. The college recognises the need to maintain its determined efforts to reduce the number who are persistently absent.

Most students say that they feel safe. They know who to turn to if they have any concerns and are confident that these are dealt with effectively. They value their school community and participate constructively in the life of the school. Most hold positive views about their learning and well-being. Older students make valuable contributions as prefects or members of the school council. Students understand and care about the issues facing their local area and the wider world.

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
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

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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The quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning are satisfactory and improving. Teachers plan work that meets the learning needs and engages the interest of most students who then make steady progress. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Marking is regular but does not always provide sufficiently constructive feedback. Where teaching is good there is purposeful interaction between teachers and students which keeps students focused on their work and working at an appropriately brisk pace. Teachers use the college's increasingly accurate assessment information effectively to provide well-designed activities and to make sure that their questions challenge each individual student's level of understanding. Many students are sufficiently confident to explain their thinking to others and teachers are able to step in quickly to correct any misconceptions. They provide detailed feedback on how students are progressing and involve the students themselves in the assessment process. Support staff understand the purposes of these lessons and their roles within them.

Specialist status has made a satisfactory contribution to improving curriculum opportunities in science, technology and mathematics. Effective partnership working with a range of external providers enhances the college's good care, guidance and support for students. It also ensures a satisfactory curriculum which includes college, vocational and work placements that meet the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of its students. A very small number of students at risk of disaffection, with challenging behaviour and/or poor attendance, are involved in a flexi-schooling programme which has successfully secured their continued engagement with education and in many cases led to improved attendance. Almost all of these students leave with some form of qualification. All such programmes are carefully matched to the needs of individual students and well supported by learning mentors.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting Principal and senior leaders are determined to raise standards within the context of an inclusive college. Analysis of the college's increasingly accurate performance information, alongside rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching, enables them to understand the college's strengths and identify areas of weaknesses. They have put in place a well-planned series of actions, including relevant professional development for staff, to bring about required improvements. Senior leaders know about

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the performance of all groups of students. Individuals or groups whose circumstances make them vulnerable are identified accurately and action is taken quickly to provide additional or alternative support. Performance information also helps teachers to plan lessons that meet the identified needs of students, particularly needs related to literacy. Governors understand the college's strengths and recognise where improvement is required. They discharge their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily.

The way in which the college engages parents and carers in the education of their children is a clear strength. Most are appreciative of the way in which the college keeps them informed about their children's progress and many welcome opportunities to take part in activities through the extended services that the college provides. Parents and carers of challenging young people or of those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable speak very positively about the way in which the college works with other agencies to provide support not only for the student but also for the parent or carer. They are adamant that without this support their children would be not involved in any form of education.

The college has good arrangements to ensure the safety of its students which are reviewed regularly. Community cohesion is promoted within the college and in the wider community through a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors. The college has an informed understanding of the community it serves and is currently completing a detailed analysis of its context which in turn will help it evaluate the effectiveness of its actions. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

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	2
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	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

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Views of parents and carers

A large majority of those parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire responded positively about the work of the school. However, a few responded negatively in particular to questions about how effectively the college helps student to have a healthy lifestyle, how the college deals with unacceptable behaviour and the way in which the college takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. All these aspects were examined closely by the inspectors. In relation to the first of these, the inspection found that the extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is satisfactory. They participate in physical education lessons and about half of them take part in voluntary sporting activities. The take-up of school meals is relatively low. The college is taking steps to make them more attractive in order to avoid students making less healthy choices. Advice and guidance on healthy lifestyles is provided through focus days and weeks by healthcare professionals and other agencies. Students rate the delivery of such sessions highly. During the inspection students' good behaviour in lessons made a positive contribution to their learning. Students told inspectors that incidents of unacceptable behaviour were dealt with effectively by members of staff. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers both in a group and individually. They stated that they had good relationships with the college and that members of staff dealt with their concerns quickly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Norham Community Technology College 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 147 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 570 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	25	99	67	7	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	33	22	102	69	9	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	28	95	65	8	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	22	95	65	13	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	32	22	102	69	7	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	19	97	66	14	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	11	102	69	21	14	1	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)	33	22	92	63	12	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	24	91	62	14	10	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	24	89	61	13	9	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	16	95	65	18	12	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	31	21	98	67	8	5	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	28	91	62	5	3	3	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.



25 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Norham Community Technology College, North Shields, NE29 7BU

Thank you for the way in which you welcomed inspectors to your college. I would like to share our findings with you.

Norham College provides you with a satisfactory and improving education and most students make satisfactory progress. Standards overall are much higher than they were at the time of the last inspection although further improvement, particularly in English and science, is required. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. The college provides you with good care, guidance and support and helps your parents and carers to support you with your studies. Most of you told us that you enjoy college. Your good behaviour, positive attitudes and keenness to take on responsibility make an important contribution to the success of the college.

We have asked the headteacher, the governors and the staff to:

- raise standards in all subjects and particularly English and science
- increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that all teachers plan lessons that match the learning needs of all students
- broaden the range of learning opportunities and the range of teaching styles for students on some alternative programmes
- provide opportunities for you to meet and work with people from different ethnic backgrounds.

We have taken very careful account of the views you expressed to us in meetings and through the questionnaire. Please accept our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector

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