

James Calvert Spence College – Acklington Road

Acklington Road, Amble, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 0NG

Inspection dates 6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough students are making quick enough progress from their starting points in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching varies too much across the college, and in the sixth form, so students do not reach the standards they are capable of.
- Lessons do not always capture students' interest. Consequently, students do not get enough work done and do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers' planning does not always result in every student receiving work that is challenging enough.
- Marking does not always tell students clearly enough how they can improve their work and students do not always respond to the advice given to them.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to practise and improve their speaking, listening, writing and mathematical skills in a range of contexts.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have a clear view of how the school needs to improve and have high ambitions for the school and students' achievements.
- Leaders have strong procedures to check the quality of teaching and take decisive action to eradicate weak teaching. Consequently, across the college, the quality of teaching and students' achievement are improving rapidly.
- Students make good progress in some subjects, such as science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Students feel safe at the college and their attendance is higher than it used to be.
- The 'development room' is effective in helping individual students overcome issues which are slowing their progress.
- The college works with students to ensure that when they leave Year 11, or the sixth form, the vast majority continue education, find employment or start further training.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons and parts of lessons. The executive headteacher conducted a joint lesson observation with the lead inspector and discussed her findings with him.
- The inspectors also observed students during assembly, break times, and around the site.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, three groups of students, four members of the governing body, and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the college improvement plan; the college own evaluation of its work; the college’s data for tracking students’ progress; the work students were doing in their books; and the college’s documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Telephone conversations were held with two parents.
- The inspectors took into account the responses to the college’s own surveys. There were 61 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also took into account 43 responses from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector
Anne Smedley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average sized secondary college. This is because it is deemed to be a secondary college, but students enter the school in Year 9 rather than in Year 7.
- An above average proportion of students is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those whose parents are in the forces and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students at the college who are White British is above the national average.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Some students access alternative courses from a range of different providers, including Choysez, Buzz, GUST and Northumberland College.
- The college is federated with its partner college, James Calvert Spence College – South Avenue. Leaders have responsibility for both federated colleges.
- Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the senior leadership structure and to the governing body. A new executive headteacher has been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan work that gets the best out of all students in every lesson
 - ensuring that all lessons capture students' interest so that they learn quickly and get on with their work
 - raising teachers' and students' expectations of how much work should be completed in each lesson
 - making sure teachers always check students' current knowledge and understanding before moving on to the next steps in learning
 - ensuring that all teachers' marking provides clear feedback to students about how to improve their work and reach the next level, and that students are given enough time to respond and make improvements.
- Increase students' progress and thus raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - embedding the college wide reading programme, so that recent improvements in standards of reading continue
 - providing students with more opportunities to develop their speaking, listening, writing and mathematical skills in a wide range of different contexts.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because teaching is not yet consistently strong enough to ensure all groups of students make good progress and reach the standards they are capable of.
- Students start college in Year 9 with attainment that is below average. Their literacy skills are particularly weak.
- Attainment is below average on several measures, including the percentage of students that gain five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Nevertheless, standards are rising rapidly. For example, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics in 2012 was 12 percentage points higher than in 2011.
- In some subjects, such as science, English literature, ICT and design technology, students make good progress. However, students' progress in English language and mathematics is not as good. This is because opportunities to practise reading and writing in other subjects are sometimes missed. In addition, there are not enough opportunities for students to use their mathematical skills in a range of contexts.
- Reading skills for the vast majority of students are improving due to successful developments in the teaching reading across the college. Students and teachers are excited about the reading programmes that have been effective in increasing standards in reading.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals and supported through the use of pupil premium reach standards similar to those of other students in college. The gap between how well these students do when compared to similar students across the country is not as wide as it is nationally. This means that the college is providing well for these students.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is too variable, so students do not do as well as they could. Consequently, their attainment at the end of Year 13 varies, but is often below average. Relatively few students attain grades A*, A or B. However, the college does guide students to the courses that are right for them. As a result, many students find employment or start further training.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do not reach the same standards as those of their peers. However, the college's information about their current progress in all year groups indicates that their progress and attainment is improving. This is because the support they are offered in class, in the 'development room', and by specialists is helping them to make faster progress.
- Students are not entered early for examinations in English language or mathematics. This means that they spend more time focusing on learning, rather than attempting the same qualification several times.
- The progress of students educated off-site for part of the week could be faster. In recent years, not enough attention has been given to checking their progress in literacy and numeracy and some students have fallen behind. This is now being addressed and these students are starting to receive the help they need in order to boost their progress.
- The alternative provision does ensure that students maintain an interest in education and promotes their employability.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Good, and some outstanding, teaching was observed during the inspection. However, there is still too much teaching that requires improvement. This is why students' progress is not yet good enough. The college's data and work seen in students' books confirms this.
- The quality of teaching is improving as a result of effective procedures to regularly check the quality of teaching, and the support and training offered to teachers to improve their skills.
- In the better lessons, teachers set work which helps all students to learn quickly, whatever their

ability. They expect the best from the students, and give students chances to show they can get on with their work and learn on their own. They use information about how well pupils have learned to help them plan future lessons. They ensure that activities are fun, and create a 'buzz' of excitement about learning.

- In a Year 9 science lesson, for example, the teacher introduced a complex concept by posing a challenge and getting the students to work things out for themselves. The teacher asked very searching questions to get the students thinking and to see how much they had understood. One student said 'the lesson is fun and challenging'. In a Year 13 art lesson, students maintained a high level of focus and worked effectively with the teacher and with each other. They were very clear about the next steps needed to improve their learning.
- Sometimes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson about *Of Mice and Men*, students were encouraged to reflect on sexism and equality issues.
- In less successful lessons, teachers do not always plan their lessons to make sure that all students are given the work that gets the best out of them. The work set for some students is too easy. Sometimes, lessons do not capture students' interest and enthusiasm in order to ensure that students learn quickly and get on with their work. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of how much work should be completed in each lesson and do not check that students' understanding and skills are secure before moving on to the next steps.
- In the sixth form, the quality of teaching is also inconsistent. In some lessons, teachers expect the very best from the students and so they make good progress. In other lessons, planning does not ensure all students are 'stretched' to quickly extend their knowledge, and students do not have enough opportunities to work things out for themselves.
- When teachers mark work they do not always provide feedback that shows students how to improve to reach the next level. Students do not always have time to respond to their teachers' advice.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In lessons, students behave well and are keen to learn. They respond well to their teachers, and cooperate well with each other. Around college the vast majority are polite, courteous, and show respect and kindness.
- Students who find it more difficult to behave respond well to college procedures and strategies. The 'development room', for example, uses a variety of programmes to help students overcome issues which are slowing their progress. As a result, the number of exclusions is decreasing, and students, when asked, say that behaviour is now good.
- Most pupils arrive on time to college and attendance is improving. This is because college procedures for tracking attendance and reminding parents and students of the importance of regular attendance are effective.
- Students say that they feel safe at college. The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire agree. Students say that if there is any bullying or unkind behaviour, adults at college will respond quickly to sort it out. They also have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including prejudice bullying and cyber bullying, about which they have very few concerns.
- The behaviour of students contributes positively to their learning, especially when teaching is good or better. Students are keen to learn, however, when lessons do not capture their attention their focus sometimes wanders.
- Adults and students are mindful of safety and were seen working safely in practical lessons during the inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- This is an improving college. This is due to good leadership at all levels, which is successfully driving forward improvements. As a result, students' progress and achievement, including in the sixth form, are improving swiftly.
- Leaders have identified the college's areas of strength and areas where improvements are needed. Plans for further improvement are clear and focused on the key priorities.
- The college's procedures for checking the quality of teaching are strong. Advice given to teachers to help them continue to develop their skills as teachers is good and, as a result, the quality of teaching is improving. Some opportunities are in place for teachers to share their skills with each other.
- Senior leaders have used performance management and the appraisal process successfully to challenge areas of underperformance. As a result, teachers currently at college meet the Teachers' Standards.
- The college tracks students' progress well. As a result, changes in teachers' planning or curriculum are well chosen and have a positive impact and rates of progress are improving.
- Academic and vocational courses are blended together, and students are given good advice about their next steps and choices. The curriculum prepares them well to live in a diverse society. However, students do not have enough chance to improve their speaking, listening and writing skills in different subjects or to practise their mathematical skills in a range of contexts.
- The college works well with parents to support students' learning. Parents are happy with the leadership of the college and agree that the college keeps their children safe. The college's procedures for checking that students are safe are in line with expected standards and give no cause for concern.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement, and leaders' accurate understanding of where further improvements are required, demonstrate that the college's ability to carry on making improvements is good.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the leaders of the college, in particular in supporting governance.
- **The governance of the college:**
 - Governors have played an important role in steering the college through times of change. They are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement for the college, including the quality of teaching. They have a good understanding of the progress students are making. They ensure that the performance of teachers is well managed, so that staff salaries and promotion generally reflect performance. Governors ensure that funding for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is deployed effectively and that it is having a positive impact on standards for these students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122363
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	402799

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	466
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Scott Dickinson
Headteacher	Christine Graham (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2010
Telephone number	01665 710636
Fax number	01665 713470
Email address	enquiries@jcsc.co.uk

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