



Prudhoe Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122351
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292379
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Hancock HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Moor Road
School category	Community		Prudhoe, Northumberland
Age range of pupils	14–19		NE42 5LJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01661 832486
Number on roll (school)	987	Fax number	01661 832859
Number on roll (6th form)	294		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Eileen Burt
		Headteacher	Dr Iain Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
14–19	6–7 December 2006	292379

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Prudhoe is a community school and college specialising in technology, mathematics and science. It is on the border of Tyneside and attracts students from other local authorities. Provision is extended beyond the school day and includes large adult and youth departments. The school leads on enterprise within the Tynedale Virtual College, which is a new development for sixth forms in the area. Nearly all the students have English as their first language. There are fewer students with learning difficulties and disabilities than normally found.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Prudhoe is a good community school and technology college. Inspection evidence agrees with the school's evaluation that it is doing well and it is continuing to improve. GCSE results in 2006 were the best yet, with 75% of students gaining higher grades compared with 59% in 2004. Specialist status has been instrumental in raising achievement in mathematics, science and technology. The school knows that results in English in Years 9, 10 and 11 are not as high as they should be, although they are slightly above the national average and the school is taking the right action to make improvements. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Teaching and learning are consistently good and there are examples of outstanding practice. The school is aware that sharing excellent practice is the key to further improvement. Assessment methods involving students are developing across the school but are not yet consistent in all subjects. Students are well cared for, enjoy learning, feel safe, and behave well. The personal development and well-being of learners are good and opportunities for students to contribute to the school are outstanding, particularly in the sixth form.

The curriculum is good and the provision of work-related courses is a particularly strong feature. The school has other strengths such as the excellent community contributions and partnerships with other schools and local industry. Technology college targets have been met and links with outside agencies and specialist teachers in the Tynedale Virtual College are excellent. Additional funding has been used to enhance staffing and work with partner schools. The new engineering centre is already well used to deliver industry standard courses.

The school is moving in the right direction, closely steered by the past and present headteacher and supported by a strong team of senior leaders. The governing body keeps a close eye on what is happening and it makes sure the school continues to move forward. The school is right to think capacity to improve is good. Limited resources and some poor accommodation are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and results are improving, except in general studies. This is being effectively addressed. Teaching is good and relationships between learners and staff are good. There is an open access policy and every effort is made to cater for the needs of all learners with an increasing range of vocational courses. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average for those students who study A-levels, but the open access policy means that attainment on entry is below average overall. Leadership and management are good and the leadership team is continually looking for ways in which learners can be helped to achieve their full potential. Learners are encouraged to take an active part in the running of the school, for example as peer mentors and assisting

in assemblies. Three learners are on the governing body and students take part in staff interviews.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise achievement and standards in English in Year 9, 10 and 11.
- Ensure good assessment practice is shared across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school accurately judges achievement and standards to be good. A high proportion of students start with attainment that is above average. Evidence from the school and the inspection shows all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress during their time at the school. The specialist college has made a significant impact on standards in mathematics, science and technology.

In 2005, mathematics and science results were above average and English results close to average in Year 9. Although the results in 2006 improved, the school knows it is not raising achievement in English quickly enough and is working closely with a significant minority of students who start with reading skills that are relatively low.

GCSE results have improved significantly. In 2006, the results were the school's best ever and well above the national average. The school is monitoring the performance of individual students closely and predictions for 2007 indicate results will continue to rise. Inspection evidence confirmed the improving trend in achievement and standards. The school has now set even more challenging targets and tracking indicates they will be met. Learners in the sixth form achieve well and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of learners are good and students gain significantly from outstanding opportunities to contribute to the school community. Students who train as mentors play a vital role in the well-being of their peers, and three are on the governing body. Students from all years play an important informal part in the appointment of staff. They are also well versed in organising fund-raising events to support charities and initiatives in school. The skills students require for their economic well-being are exceptionally well developed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, particularly in the way links abroad, such as the conservation project in Honduras, promote cultural and multi-cultural awareness. The behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is good. Students are eager to learn, work well together, and show mutual respect.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted through extensive sporting activities. Attendance is satisfactory and unauthorised absence is below the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning is good in the main school and in the sixth form. This is due to the good planning and preparation by teachers, and the good behaviour and cooperation of the students. Teachers set clear learning targets, which allow students to understand what is required. In all lessons, teachers build and sustain good relationships with their students through praise and encouragement. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used with confidence by teachers to engage and motivate students.

A good system for collecting assessment information contributes to effective target setting, monitoring individual progress, and the identification of pupils who require further support with their learning. Assessment methods are developing across the school but are not consistent across all subjects. In history, practice is exemplary and students appreciate learning from each other. The personal organiser for students is used well by students, parents and teachers to communicate and improve learning, especially for those students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school. It helps students to select subjects which are well matched to their future needs and their abilities. The school has developed a good system of career guidance using 'life skills' days and the school's tutorial programme since the last inspection. ICT provision is improving and the school has good strategies in place to ensure that it is fully effective.

There is a good range of courses including vocational GCSEs from which Years 10 and 11 can choose. The school has extended its academic courses in the sixth form by offering film studies and music technology together with a relevant range of vocational courses. The school is working closely with partners to improve the number and variety of vocational courses. A wide range of extra curricular and enrichment activities are well attended by students of all ages and abilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support provided for students are good. The development and continuing expansion of the extended schools partnership is enhancing the quality of care and support and providing a clearer picture of individual students' problems and needs. Child protection measures meet statutory requirements.

The way students are involved with tracking their learning and progress has improved. Personal and academic targets are set through individual learning plans. Students keep a detailed personal record of performance, self-assessment, involvement in activities, and career aspirations. The school does everything possible to ensure the health and safety of students on a site which is not well suited to the current numbers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school judges leadership and management to be good in the main school and in the sixth form. Inspection evidence supports this evaluation and partnerships are a particular strength. The recently appointed headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school which is widely shared. Leaders at all levels are involved in decision making and monitoring the quality of provision.

Professional development for all staff is a priority. The Tynedale Virtual College initiative means that staff now have more opportunities to consult with other schools and share good practice. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are well supported through their line managers. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous. Underachieving subjects are quickly identified and strategies put in place to help them to improve.

The governors know the school well and fulfil their role as critical friends. They are involved in planning and the self evaluation process. Governors observe lessons and undertake 'learning walks' on a regular basis, which help them to monitor various aspects of school life. Limited resources are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The additional funding received through the Technology College status is used very effectively but there is still much to do. The state of some of the accommodation remains a concern for students, parents, governors and staff.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Prudhoe Community High School

Moor Road

Prudhoe

Northumberland

NE42 5LJ

8 December 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for all your help when I inspected your school with my colleagues on 6 and 7 December. We particularly enjoyed hearing your views and listening to you talk about the work you were doing. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account.

I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

- Prudhoe is a good community school and technology college.
- The school is moving in the right direction, closely steered by the past and present headteachers and supported by a strong team of senior leaders.
- GCSE results this year are the best in the history of the school.
- The provision of work-related courses is a particularly strong feature.
- The quality of teaching and learning is high.
- The opportunities you have to contribute to the school and community are outstanding.

Your teachers and the staff work very hard and want to make the school even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they could:

- continue to raise achievement and standards in English in Years 9, 10 and 11
- ensure good assessment practice is shared across all subjects.

I wish you every success in all you do in the future. It is well deserved.

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector