

Walbottle Campus Technology College

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 108524 |
| Local Authority | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 295359 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 March 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Andrew Johnson HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1790 |
| 6th form | 240 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | |
| Headteacher | Mr Michael Booth |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 January 2006 |
| School address | Hexham Road Walbottle Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 9TP |
| Telephone number | 0191 2678221 |
| Fax number | 0191 2646025 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. When Walbottle Campus Technology College was inspected in January 2006 it was judged to require a Notice to Improve.

Description of the school

Walbottle Campus Technology College is situated on a large site to the west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Year 7 students are housed on a separate site three miles away from the main campus. It became a comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18 in 2005; previously it was a high school that accepted pupils aged 13 to 18. The school is much larger than average and draws its students from a wide catchment area which includes areas of high social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high, as is the proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or students whose first language is not English. The students' attainment on entry to the school is below average.

The school has held specialist status for technology since 1995 and is an accredited training centre for the European Computer Driving License (ECDL). It has attained the Healthy Schools and Drugs Quality award and Investors in People accreditation. The first phase of a significant programme of building redevelopment began in February 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Good leadership and management have been the driving force behind the significant improvements that have occurred. The school now provides a satisfactory quality of education and has several good aspects. It provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve. Decisive action taken by the headteacher, recognised at the time of the previous inspection, has now had time to show through in improved achievement at the end of Key Stage 4. A rigorous programme of quality improvement, including a more effective approach to the use of students' performance data, allows managers and teachers to take more responsibility and be more accountable for students' progress. The process of self-evaluation has been improved and it is now more directly linked to taking action. Managers have made very good use of the high quality external support provided by the local authority. For example, there are now clear learning objectives set out at the beginning of every lesson and clear targets in every student's exercise book.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Students are making better progress in lessons and know what their targets are. Leaders agree that more work is needed to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and have challenging plans for the future. Students' achievements have improved and are now satisfactory. Although standards attained by students in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are still below national averages they have improved very significantly. Girls' achievements are consistently higher than boys. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, not only in their academic studies but also in their personal development, confidence and maturity.

The curriculum has improved and is now good because it has been modified to better meet students' needs. The school's specialist technology status has been used successfully to develop the range of courses available; examination results in most technology subjects are good.

The personal development and well-being of the students are good, as are the care, guidance and support provided. There is extensive pastoral support for students and good partnerships with external agencies to ensure the students at most risk of underachieving are well supported and reach their potential. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The headteacher and senior staff often walk the corridors, drop into lessons and supervise students at the end of the day. Learning development centres offer effective support to students with literacy or numeracy difficulties and an alternative to exclusion to students whose behaviour is poor. Provision set up in the community has proved very successful in meeting the needs of students who refuse to come to school. Exclusion rates are very low and the school often accepts students from other schools who have been excluded. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and are now above the local averages, although very slightly below the national average. Most parents who returned a questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors were extremely positive about the school. A high proportion of students enjoy school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory and improving. Leadership and management are good. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form and A-level results have improved overall, although there are still a small number of subjects where there is a sustained pattern of underachievement. Very few students leave the sixth form early and

most progress to higher or further education. Pass rates and grades at A level are particularly high in English, geography, business studies and engineering. However, there is a trend of underachievement in biology, art and psychology. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and in some subjects such as mathematics there have been significant improvements which have led to higher achievements.

Students' personal development and well-being are good and sixth-form students have a positive effect on promoting maturity and responsibility in the whole school. Care, guidance and support are good and there are effective tutorials where students' progress is closely monitored. There is a wide range of courses from which students can choose appropriate options.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English and mathematics particularly for boys.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' achievements have improved and are now satisfactory.

Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved significantly in the last year and, although they are still below the national average, they represent satisfactory achievement for these students. The number of students reaching the expected level in mathematics and science is now close to the national average. Progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection; it has improved in mathematics and science but the 2006 test results in English were disappointing. Scrutiny of students' work reveals that it is closely monitored by teachers and standards are improving. In 2006, Key Stage 4 results showed a significant improvement. The proportion of students achieving good passes at GCSE rose by 11% to 48%. When English and mathematics GCSEs are included there has also been an improvement, albeit less dramatic, rising from 26% to 30%. Boys' progress has improved, but is still significantly lower than girls'. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and the number of students who leave the school without any qualifications is very low. Students continue to make satisfactory progress in the sixth form and the standards they attain have improved overall. However, there are still considerable variations in success rates between subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The attendance level has continued to improve since the last inspection and, although very slightly below the national average, it exceeds the local authority average. Attendance and punctuality have improved most in Years 7 and 8 because of the rigorous application of absence procedures. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The number of students removed from lessons because of poor behaviour has declined and is low. This has been due to the effective application of the school's behaviour policy. Good behaviour and positive attitudes shown by students have improved because of the rewards scheme. Students feel safe in school and the very small number of

bullying incidents are resolved fully. An increasing number of students take responsibility within the school or take part in community and charitable events through the school council or new 'student voice' initiative. Consequently students' moral and social development is good. Spiritual awareness and cultural development are good. There is a well constructed programme of assemblies that consider themes such as the Fair Trade movement or the Holocaust and that challenges students' thinking and attitudes. Students recognise the importance of healthy eating and exercise and many enjoy participation in a range of sporting activities. A high proportion of students progress to further education or employment and they appreciate the good guidance they receive, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, to prepare them for their future careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection and there are now very few inadequate lessons. This is improving students' progress and standards, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4. In the best lessons observed the pace of learning was challenging, even for the most able. Most teachers used a wide range of resources to ensure that all students understood basic principles and concepts. Progress has improved because teachers and managers use a wide range of performance information effectively to ensure everyone keeps on track. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because teachers adopt a personalised approach to their programmes of learning, and teaching assistants give them very effective support. Managers recognise that there is still room for improvement and are determined to raise the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. They encourage teachers to share good practice, and staff development has become more focused on teaching and learning. Some of the areas for improvement in the quality of teaching are in the quantity and quality of homework that is set and the effectiveness of marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good because it more closely meets the needs and interests of students. This has resulted in students' raising levels of achievement and enjoyment. In Key Stage 3, students take part in successful technology lessons early in their secondary school career, and in Key Stage 4 all students study technology. Most students study a vocational course because of the interesting range of options offered. Gifted and talented students participate in good extension programmes that challenge them and improve their progress. Students realise the importance of staying fit and healthy because of the well planned programme for personal, social and health education. A high proportion of students participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The sporting activities are particularly strong. Students are well motivated by their participation in a wide range of educational trips and visits. The school now provides for Key Stage 4 students to study the sciences as separate options. There is now a much broader range of subjects available in the sixth form that meet the needs and interests of students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support of students are good. Safeguarding arrangements are in place. The role of the house tutors has been made more effective and students are given very effective pastoral support. Good use is made of external specialist help. The attendance and progress of students who refuse to attend school have been improved by the very effective provision based in the community. The most vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported by learning mentors and specialist teachers in the learning development centres. The vast majority of parents who returned questionnaires or spoke to inspectors were very supportive of the school. Parents are particularly pleased by the improved communication about their children's successes and this reinforces students' ambition to do well. The systems for monitoring students' progress have improved and as a result teachers are able to identify areas of concern about underachievement and set challenging targets. Students know their targets well, and effective careers guidance enables them to identify appropriate further education options. The school is firmly committed to inclusion and this means that the promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Any discrimination is tackled effectively as is revealed in the racial incidents log.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher and senior team has been critical to the improvements made in all aspects of the school and in particular in achievements and standards. In the last three years the school's leadership has been strengthened significantly and staff have been appointed with a proven track record of raising achievement or excellence in teaching. The observations of teaching and learning carried out by senior staff provide an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. The self-evaluation process is thorough and effective, providing a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school improvement plan is well thought out, sets challenging targets and gives clear lines of accountability. The work of most middle managers has improved. However a few still do not adopt a sufficiently rigorous approach to ensuring improvement measures are applied consistently. Governors provide strong support and hold the senior leadership team to account. Financial management is sound. Accommodation is set to be transformed when the new school is completed in two years' time. There are effective and improving partnerships with feeder schools and local colleges. Success in a very wide number of areas demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

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Annex A

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 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| 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? | 3 | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 3 |
| 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 | 2 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | 3 |
| 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.

Annex A

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

26 March 2007

Dear Students

Inspection Walbottle Campus Technology College, Walbottle, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 9TP

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We saw your lessons, looked at your work and spoke to some of you and your parents or carers. We read the questionnaires and letters completed by you and your parents or carers; all of that evidence was very helpful. The last time the school was inspected was just over a year ago and it was given a notice to improve because it required some significant improvements. I am pleased to tell you this is no longer the case and I have summarised below some of the reasons why.

- The GCSE examination results and other test results are much better.
- Attendance has improved.
- The range of subjects you can study has improved to more closely match your interests and needs.
- The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support to encourage you to reach your full potential.
- The headteacher and managers are making a good contribution to improving the school.
- Teaching has improved and there are very few inadequate lessons.

The improvements made recently prove that the school has the capacity to go even further. So we are asking you to work with the staff to make the following changes:

- make sure that even more lessons are of good quality and everyone makes good progress
- improve your examination and test results even further particularly in English and mathematics.

I wish you every success in the future and look forward to visiting you again in your new school.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools