

Northfleet Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118928
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339325
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Nasim Butt

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	926
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matt Boulton
Headteacher	Jane Partridge
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2010
School address	Colyer Road Gravesend DA11 8BG
Telephone number	01474 533802
Fax number	01474 536122
Email address	partridgej@ntc.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Inspectors were in classrooms for the majority of the available time looking at learning. They evaluated 37 separate lessons and observed 34 different teachers working with students. They met with three separate groups of students, with members of staff and with two governors. They observed the school's work and looked at school self-review documents, records of governing body meetings, the school's own information about the progress of students, and results of questionnaires completed by 344 parents and carers, 245 students and 101 members of staff.

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

- the extent to which care, guidance and support meets the needs of all students, in particular those from vulnerable groups
- how well the school uses assessment data and individual target setting to secure improvement for all groups
- the rigour and depth of self-evaluation at all levels and the impact it is having on raising attainment, particularly in English at Key Stage 4
- the impact of the school's technology college status on outcomes for students, including their economic well-being.

Information about the school

Northfleet Technology College is an average-sized boys' school with a few girls in the sixth form. It is a non-selective school in a grammar school area. The school has specialist technology college status, placing particular emphasis on science, mathematics, and design and technology. Sixth-form provision is made in partnership with other local schools under the umbrella of the Gravesham consortium. A high proportion of students have been identified as having some form of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most boys are White British, and about one fifth of students are from other ethnic groups, with a minority of these students speaking English as an additional language. The current headteacher assumed post in September 2009 and was previously a deputy headteacher at the same school. In 2008, the school was designated as a National Challenge school. A new school is under construction as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme and the building work is expected to be completed by July 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

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that has made good progress in improving some aspects of its work in the last two years. Outcomes for individuals and groups are satisfactory and show a rising trend. Though attainment is still low, it has improved in the last two years and overall, students are currently making satisfactory progress. The high proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the well-tailored support they receive. Attainment in mathematics is significantly better than that in English. The school recognises this and has put in place extra staffing and targeted support for English which is beginning to have the desired impact. The small numbers of students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as their peers, and this includes those who speak English as an additional language. Overall, teaching in the main school is satisfactory and consistently good in the sixth form. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are good and this is a real strength of the work of senior staff. As a consequence, the small proportion of inadequate teaching has been swiftly identified and targeted support put in place. The strong drive to improve the quality of teaching is beginning to impact on the quality of learning, as seen in the students' current work. However, the impact is less evident in English and literacy lessons for more able students in Years 7 to 9. Marking is generally satisfactory and there are examples of good written feedback in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain in Years 7 to 9 where marking does not always provide the guidance students need to improve. The most effective teaching secures high level oral responses from students, although opportunities to encourage students to be as involved as possible are missed in many lessons. The range of curriculum opportunities provided is good, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The range of the 'out of school hours' provision is very good and well attended by students throughout the school. The college's technology specialist status has been instrumental in forging key partnerships to expand curricular choice and opportunities. Students in Year 11 and the sixth form speak approvingly of the range of vocational options now available to them. The school has worked hard to improve behaviour and attendance. During the inspection, much good behaviour was observed, though a sizeable minority of parents and carers and students expressed concern about this aspect in the inspection questionnaires. The school provides consistently good care, guidance and support. Parents and students spoke positively about the nature of the individual support available and students spoke of 'staff going out of their way for you'. The new leadership team has done well to bring about the improvements in attainment, curriculum and attendance which have been secured in the last two years. Self-evaluation is detailed and thorough. For example, attainment in English at the end

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of Key Stage 4 is beginning to rise because accurate diagnosis has led to well-tailored, insightful action. In addition, the school is meeting its National Challenge targets. Therefore, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, especially in English, by
 - improving how well teachers assess students' learning in lessons to identify what students need to improve
 - improving the use of assessment information to ensure English lessons are more consistently challenging for the students who are more able.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that staff
 - consistently use the good information the school has about students' prior attainment and capability when planning work
 - bringing the standard of weaker marking up to the level of the best.
 - consistently planning tasks that match each student's needs and interests from the outset of the lesson
- About 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**

Results in mathematics are fast approaching the national average and there is evidence that outcomes in English have begun to improve. Since 2007, there has been a year on year rise in the proportion of students who achieve five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including functional English and mathematics. The school's tracking data show that Year 11 students are on track to attain the challenging targets set in mathematics and English. In most of the lessons seen during this inspection, students were judged to be making satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. For example, a group of science students in Year 11 worked well independently, applying the outcomes of their experiment on reaction rates to new situations. In many classes, students at the early stages of language acquisition were seen to be well engaged in learning because of good visual resources backed up by personalised support. Occasionally, however, learning is inadequate due to lack of opportunities for students to purposefully interact. Where there is pace in the lessons, coupled with individual short-term targets, students' motivation to learn is good. During the inspection, students behaved well around the school and in lessons. They are polite and courteous to visitors. Students of all ages and different backgrounds were seen to mix well together. A very small minority of students who responded to the inspection questionnaire said they do not feel safe. However, when spoken to, students say they feel safe in and around the school and have a sound understanding of how to keep safe and act responsibly in lessons. Exclusions have gone

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up slightly as the school implements its ‘discipline with dignity’ behaviour policy. Students understand the importance of staying healthy and their high take-up of opportunities to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example through sports, is good. Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. A good sense of community is created in the mixed-age tutor groups where students are seen to enjoy the company of those who are older or younger than themselves. Students develop their numeracy and technology skills in a wide range of areas and this helps to prepare them for future education and the world of work. The school’s specialism makes an important contribution in this regard. However, students’ literacy skills are less well developed.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils’ behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching was good or better in one half of the lessons observed during the inspection. In the better lessons, appropriate challenge moved students on at a brisk pace. Teachers used information and communication technology and other resources well; they encouraged collaboration in paired and group work, and inspired students to produce work of which they could be proud. Less effective lessons, including some that

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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were inadequate, were characterised by extended periods of the teacher talking to the class. This resulted in students becoming passive learners. In addition, the good assessment data available was not used to match lesson activities to the varying needs of the students. The quality of assessment and marking is not yet consistent within and between curriculum areas. However, an innovative and expanding curriculum is enhancing choice and opportunity for students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The vocational element is especially strong and well matched to the needs and aspirations of Northfleet’s students. The ‘Great Learners are Successful’ (GLAS) programme for Years 7 and 8 is successful in developing students’ personal, learning and thinking skills. However, the school’s attainment data shows that in conjunction with the discrete literacy lessons, it has yet to make a notable impact on standards in English, particularly for the more able students. The impressive range of enrichment activities makes a strong contribution to promoting students’ health and fitness. Students are well cared for and supported. The school is especially effective in identifying needs and swiftly organising appropriate support. For example, a student at the early stages of learning English was making good progress as a result of well-targeted personalised support. Vulnerable students make good progress because they can take risks in the caring atmosphere that envelops them.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have embedded ambition and are driving improvement with a sharp focus on improving teaching and assessment. The headteacher has clear expectations of the effective classroom practice required. She is supported very well by the learning programme directors who lead and manage the school’s five learning sets. A very large majority of staff questionnaire returns expressed strong support for the school’s senior leadership. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff and middle leaders are accurate. As a result, standards are improving and students make satisfactory progress towards challenging targets. Equality of opportunity is no better than satisfactory because more able students in English do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Governance has improved over the last two years and is now satisfactory. As a result of sound training and development, governors are beginning to support and challenge the school effectively. Safeguarding procedures are good and the school is very thorough in ensuring that all current government

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requirements are met. Partnerships with a wide range of education providers are a strength of the school’s work and have had a positive impact on curriculum development. Community cohesion is promoted well in the school and national links are satisfactory. The global dimension, however, is less well developed. Though attendance at parent and carer consultation evenings is high, broader strategies to engage parents and carers in their children’s learning is an area for further development. Senior staff and governors deploy resources adequately and the school 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	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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

Sixth form

Most students enter the sixth form with attainment that is below average. As a result of consistently good teaching and well-targeted support, the vast majority make good progress and attain average standards. As a member of the Gravesham consortium, the school has been able to improve its curriculum offer to sixth formers. Students in the Sports Academy say they really enjoy sports science and value the opportunities provided to develop their leadership skills. The practical nature of most subjects means that most students are well equipped to enter employment or pursue their interests in higher education. However, leaders recognise that progress is not as rapid in some A-level subjects and are taking action to improve this. Students readily take up opportunities to support the school. Some, for example, mentor younger students within the school and are active members of the school community. The school recognises that the current administrative systems in the sixth form are not sufficiently robust, and this

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is an area for improvement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over one third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and most express their approval of the quality of education provided. The majority express their support for the new leadership team and acknowledge the attention given to their sons' individual needs. A sizeable minority of parents and carers are of the view that behaviour is not dealt with effectively. During the inspection, most of the behaviour that inspectors observed in classrooms and around the school was good. A small proportion of parents and carers say that the school does not do enough to help them support their sons' learning. The school recognises this and has plans in place to address the issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northfleet 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 344 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 928 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	19	235	68	34	10	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	71	21	242	70	20	6	4	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	95	28	199	58	40	12	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	88	26	211	61	31	9	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	90	26	210	61	28	8	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	79	23	201	58	40	14	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	23	201	58	40	14	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	24	217	63	20	6	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	77	22	231	67	26	8	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	82	24	189	55	47	14	19	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	17	216	63	42	12	10	3
The school is led and managed effectively	78	23	221	64	22	6	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	30	203	59	27	8	3	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



27 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Northfleet Technology College, Gravesend DA11 8BG

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school and also for telling us what you thought about the school. We now know that you enjoy school and work hard. We judged the school to be satisfactory, yet have made good progress in a number of areas. You achieve below average standards in your GCSEs, though mathematics standards are considerably higher than those in English. You make satisfactory progress overall, although some of you make good progress. In the main, this is due to the sound teaching, good curriculum and care, guidance and support the school provides. Sixth form students make good progress.

You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. In questionnaire responses, a few of you said that you do not feel safe in the school. However, when inspectors spoke to you, you said that the school is a very safe place and you feel comfortable here. You make a satisfactory contribution to your community. We were impressed with the way you interact with each other in your vertical tutor groups. The headteacher leads and manages the school effectively and is well supported by her senior leaders.

We have asked the school to raise attainment, especially in English, by:

- improving how well your learning is assessed during lessons, so you can be helped to improve and challenged at the right level
- improving the use of assessment information to ensure lessons are more consistently challenging for those of you who are more able
- improving marking where this is needed.

We have also asked the school to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good throughout the school.

You can help the school to further improve by attending well and participating fully in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt

Lead inspector

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