

Ferryhill Business Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114299
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	338332
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	635
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev K Lumsdon
Headteacher	Mr Philip Bowden
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 28 lessons, during which 26 teachers were seen. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, governors and representatives of the local authority, including the college's Improvement Partner. They observed the college's work on and off site; and looked at attainment and progress data; students' work; and records of monitoring and evaluation activities, including minutes of governors' meetings, records of professional development, the college's improvement plan and documentation relating to safeguarding procedures. They also took account of 55 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and of questionnaires returned by staff and students.

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

- whether the college's trend of rising attainment was being maintained, especially in English and mathematics
- how well the college develops students' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
- the role of the college's specialism in promoting partnerships and improving outcomes for students
- how well leadership and management at all levels promote effective improvement.

Information about the school

The college is smaller than average. The majority of students are of White British origin, with very few from minority ethnic groups and only a tiny minority who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The college has held specialist status for Business and Enterprise since 2003. The college holds awards for Investors in People, Healthy Schools and the International Schools Award.

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

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is a good college. Many aspects of its work are outstanding. The excellent care, guidance and support given to students to help them succeed, together with the rigorous and regular monitoring of learning, inspire them to develop ambition, drive and the conviction that they will succeed.

Students' attainment is average. However, early entries in GCSE examinations indicate that it will have risen significantly this year to above average at the end of Key Stage 4, after a dip in 2009, as the impact of new systems has taken full effect. The college's data indicate that this trend will be sustained in the current Year 10. This represents exceptional progress for students, who are reaching, and sometimes exceeding, very challenging targets. Data for students in Key Stage 3 show a similar picture of exceptionally good progress from students' below average starting points, with attainment above age-related expectations in several subjects.

Students' enjoyment of learning is seen in their above average attendance, good behaviour and willingness to contribute to improving the college community. A relative weakness in their personal development is a limited knowledge and understanding of the diversity of modern society. Students are well taught overall and much of the teaching is outstanding, especially in the English department. Teachers track students' learning well. They set good levels of challenge and expect students to work hard. A broad and innovative curriculum at Key Stage 4, led by the college's business and enterprise specialism, meets the needs of students extremely well, ensuring pathways to success for all groups. At Key Stage 3, enterprise, information and communication technology (ICT) and the literacy curriculum give students an understanding of how to apply key skills in everyday life. There is not a concerted approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum and this is a relative weakness.

Outstanding leadership and unflinching determination from the headteacher, ably supported by senior and middle leaders, has enabled the college to make rapid improvement both in outcomes for students and to the quality of provision since the previous inspection. Staff fully support the headteacher's vision for improvement and morale is high. The impressive record of improvement since the previous inspection, and the effective monitoring systems in place, show an outstanding capacity for further improvement. Governors too bring excellent levels of support, challenge and expertise to the service of the college.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the use of numeracy skills in other subjects so that students have a clear understanding of how these skills apply in everyday life.
- Increase students' knowledge and understanding of the various beliefs and traditions in our society so that they learn to accept and value difference as part of being a good citizen.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment is average and they achieve well. Standards are rising rapidly, particularly in English and mathematics. Students of all abilities make excellent progress from their different starting points. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because they are very well supported and have a curriculum that is tailored to their individual needs. All students achieve well because they enjoy their learning and are well taught. They work hard to meet the challenges set in lessons and are ambitious to do well because teachers have convinced them that they will succeed. They understand how they can improve their standards and demonstrate a determination to achieve their targets. They relish their successes and rightly show a pride in their achievements.

Students' good, and sometimes excellent, behaviour makes a strong contribution to their good achievement. They support each other well in lessons so that time is used efficiently for learning as they move quickly from one activity to another without loss of time. A good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle helps students stay healthy, safe and form good relationships. Students have confidence in staff to support them and resolve any problems they may have. While they acknowledge that bullying sometimes occurs, they are also certain that it is dealt with quickly and effectively by the college. Students show a good understanding of the needs of others and are keen to make a contribution to their college, the local and other communities further afield. They are well prepared for the future with a range of workplace skills, acquired through the college's focus on developing enterprise. Their good attendance also stands them in good stead for the future. While their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good overall, the college acknowledges the need to develop students' understanding of the diversity of beliefs and traditions in modern society.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and there is much that is outstanding. High expectations and challenge characterise the strongest teaching. These qualities are supported by a good range of strategies to engage students and to encourage a shared focus on learning. Common strengths in teaching include the establishment of secure relationships in the classroom and good subject knowledge that enables teachers to convey the content of lessons confidently. The use of assessment for lesson planning and delivery is good and enables progress to be carefully monitored. Questioning is used well to gauge students' understanding. This is particularly effective when teachers probe initial responses and challenge students to think more deeply about their learning. Teachers' marking of books is generally good because comments are helpful in showing students how to improve their work with appropriate targets. Good use of the interactive whiteboard stimulates students' interest, enhances sustained concentration and ensures effective learning. In satisfactory lessons, there is too much direction by the teacher. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to learning by encouraging students to think rather than completing tasks for them.

The curriculum has developed well since the previous inspection and is good overall. It is outstanding at Key Stage 4 because of the numerous routes to success it provides for older students. At Key Stage 3 there are strengths in the application of literacy and enterprise skills and personal, social and health education. The application of numeracy skills in other subjects is less well developed. Good ICT skills are developed by the time students leave college because ICT is a compulsory subject for all students and has high status. There has been considerable impact from specialist status. For example, the college has successfully developed an enterprise culture which pervades planning in most curriculum areas. It has also made a considerable input to the development of enterprise in its primary feeder schools. Attainment in all three specialist subjects of mathematics, ICT and business has been raised. A relative weakness of the specialism is that good practice in mathematics and ICT is not passed on in a systematic way to other areas of the curriculum.

Outstanding care, guidance and support are the key to students' excellent progress. Comprehensive, flexible systems, which have the welfare and success of every student at heart, are rigorously implemented by staff at all levels. High quality, individualised support for students who need it is fundamental to the college's inclusive ethos. The learning support unit provides outstanding care and support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable; one student expressed the view of many saying, 'The college has given me solutions to solve my problems.'

Excellent links with external agencies ensure that these students receive all they need to take their place alongside their peers in accessing all that is on offer and that they enjoy the same success in college. Close monitoring of attendance, and revisions to the curriculum to encourage better attendance, have resulted in a dramatic decline in persistent absence, with the result that overall attendance is now above average. Excellent links with primary schools underpin outstanding transition for students joining the college.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and direction for the development of the college. He ensures that leadership and management roles are well distributed so that staff at all levels make a highly effective contribution to the college's improvement. Rigorous monitoring gives the college an accurate and detailed base for future planning, so that actions for improvement are very well targeted. This has enabled the college to move forward rapidly in the most significant areas of its work since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and the curriculum has improved significantly so that standards have risen sharply this year. Staff are fully committed to the headteacher's vision for a highly inclusive school that provides the best opportunities for every student to achieve well. Senior leaders and middle leaders are rigorous in tracking the quality of provision and students' progress. Close teamwork ensures that any underachievement is picked up quickly and appropriate intervention provided to get students back on track. This vigorous approach to supporting students ensures that all have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Governors provide outstanding support and challenge for the college. They focus extremely well on holding the college to account for standards and for its management of all resources. They ensure that safeguarding fully meets requirements and that community cohesion is promoted well; the college has a thorough understanding of the community's needs and works effectively to meet these, through regular, purposeful activities and by taking account of the views of parents and carers and the community. The college has excellent links for learning with neighbouring institutions. These are pivotal in providing the many routes to success for students. Excellent links with external agencies ensure that students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given the specialist support and guidance they need to succeed as well as their peers. Good links with parents and carers create a strong supportive partnership for students' learning and well-being.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires are overwhelmingly supportive of the college and value how it cares for and motivates their children. Several parents and carers commented on how well the college's staff track students' attendance, 'so they can't truant'. Others are delighted that their children are 'extremely happy and love lessons', and that the headteacher is 'approachable and listens to children and parents'. A tiny minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying. Inspectors agree with parents and carers that their children are extremely well cared for and supported. They also found that students feel safe and secure in school and have high levels of trust in the staff, who they say will help them solve any problems they have. While students reported that there were instances of bullying, they were adamant that these are dealt with promptly and fairly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ferryhill Business Enterprise 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 635 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	29	33	60	6	11	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	40	31	56	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	33	31	56	5	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	38	30	55	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	27	36	65	4	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	20	33	60	5	9	3	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	18	38	69	4	7	2	4
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)	19	35	32	58	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	25	35	64	5	9	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	27	33	60	5	9	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	22	34	62	5	9	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	16	29	33	60	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	29	34	62	4	7	0	0

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 all 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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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 pupils' 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.



26 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ferryhill Business Enterprise College, Ferryhill, DL17 8RW

Thank you for your help and the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your college recently. We enjoyed talking with you and hearing your views about the college. We are delighted to report that your college is judged to be good and some aspects of its work are outstanding, which perhaps explains why you enjoy it so much. Here are the reasons why your college is so good.

- You are well taught, work hard and make excellent progress in your learning.
- Your curriculum is well planned and because of the college's specialism for business and enterprise you develop good skills of enterprise and in ICT. The curriculum makes excellent provision for you in Years 10 and 11, so that you have many routes to success.
- We agree with you that you receive excellent care, guidance and support. Staff know you very well and support you all to do your best.
- The leadership, management and governance of the college are excellent. Staff and governors are committed to getting the best for you and from you, and they have high quality systems for evaluating how effective the college is.
- You develop good personal qualities that prepare you well for the future. You are mature, considerate and caring young people, who are well informed to make sensible decisions about your personal safety and healthy lifestyles, and you show a refreshing determination to succeed.

There are a couple of things we think would help you to be even better prepared for the future. These are: that you learn more about the different beliefs and traditions in our society, to help you develop understanding and tolerance of differences; and that the school helps you to apply your mathematical skills in other subjects so that you see the usefulness of mathematics in everyday life.

On behalf of the inspection team, I send our very best wishes to all at Ferryhill Business Enterprise College.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick,
Lead Inspector

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