

Northallerton College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121710
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327555
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Keeler HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	14–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	853
Sixth form	361
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Dennis
Headteacher	Mr M Hill
Date of previous school inspection	December 2005
School address	Grammar School Lane Northallerton DL6 1DD
Telephone number	01609 773340
Fax number	01609 770265

Age group	14–18
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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

Northallerton College caters for students aged 14-18. Nearly all students enter the college in Year 10 from one 11-14 secondary school in the town. Students are almost exclusively of White British heritage and the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. Although the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low, students do not generally come from advantaged backgrounds. In partnership with its 11-14 feeder school, Northallerton College has been a specialist technology college since 1998.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Northallerton is a good college that has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is an inclusive college where the needs of every student come first. This is apparent in the good level of care, guidance and support and also in the outstanding curriculum that enhances the learning opportunities of all students.

Standards are significantly above the national average and are rising. The proportion of students attaining 5 A* to C grades including English and mathematics, together with those leaving with 5 A* to G and 1 A* to G grades has risen strongly in recent years and are much higher than the national averages. While standards in English are above the national average, the progress that students make and the standards they achieve could be better. The college is aware of this and have introduced initiatives to rectify the situation which are beginning to take effect, but there is still some way to go. Students also make good progress and achieve well in vocational courses since they are tailored to their needs and those of the community. The extent to which the curriculum is closely aligned to students' needs and interests is one reason why the quality of the curriculum is outstanding. The college uses its specialist technology status to good effect by providing frequent opportunities for students to learn new technological skills that enhance their learning. Teachers also benefit from the sharing of good practice in relation to technology, putting this in to practice across the college.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, students make good progress. Learning is particularly effective when students are well motivated and are actively participating in lessons. A particular feature of teaching is the quality of relationships between staff and students which impacts positively on their self-esteem and personal development. Students' personal development and well-being is good. They show positive attitudes and good working habits. Behaviour is good during lessons and as students move around the college. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The extent to which students make a positive contribution to the community is commendable. The school council has influenced a number of improvements to the college, including improved dining facilities that promote a balanced diet. This has benefited all students because they now put into practice what they have learned about healthy eating. A key element of college life is the link with a local special school whose students use the college facilities on a regular basis. The support and understanding demonstrated by the students of Northallerton College is good and shows the extent to which they embrace the shared values of the community and contribute to its cohesiveness. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Students settle in quickly when they arrive in Year 10 due to first rate transitional arrangements. When they leave they are well prepared for higher education or the workplace. Excellent links are established with a range of external agencies to support the welfare of all students so that they may achieve their potential. Systems have been introduced to monitor students' progress and this is beginning to make an impact on their rate of progress.

The progress made since the previous inspection, the steadily rising standards and students leaving college as well-rounded, responsible individuals has not happened by chance. It is a reflection on the good leadership of the principal and a strong and supportive senior leadership team that are committed to providing the best education

for all students in their care. All staff work together for the common good and there is a strong sense of teamwork within the college community. The principal is forward thinking and plays a lead role in securing partnerships with external agencies to provide a range of opportunities to augment the educational provision available from the college. This is benefiting all students. The principal and senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college based on accurate self-evaluation. Appropriate strategic plans are also in place to take the college forward. Subject leaders, some relatively new in post and, therefore, inexperienced, have a clear idea as to what needs improving within their department. At present they lack the skills required to initiate and embed change. The governing body provide a good balance of support and challenge and know the college well. Significant improvements since the previous inspection, a commitment to raising standards further and a governing body that holds college leaders to account indicates that the capacity to improve is good. The college provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Sixth Form is good and this stems from good management. Students enter the sixth form with above average standards. They make good progress and as a result standards are significantly above average and improving. Students make good progress because teaching is generally good and expectations are high. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their passion enthuses students and makes them keen to learn. In the best lessons, students are actively involved and are encouraged to learn independently and to develop their group work skills. However, in a few less successful, though nonetheless satisfactory lessons, teachers dominate the discussion and miss opportunities to allow students to engage with work independently and this can inhibit progress. An outstanding curriculum contributes to students' enjoyment in learning. It offers students an individual choice from a wide range of academic A-level courses and vocational options which link well with employment patterns in the locality and with their previous studies. There are also many opportunities for students to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities. Students' personal development is outstanding. They know how to stay healthy and safe and adopt active lifestyles. They are mature young people with a positive outlook on the world and are well prepared for their future studies and careers. Students respond well to the varied opportunities to take responsibility. They care for others who are less fortunate than themselves, both locally and globally. They are very well cared for by their teachers who treat them as individuals and offer them outstanding care and support. Students particularly appreciate the guidance that they receive, especially the way the college monitors their progress and helps them to improve their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English further at Key Stage 4.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders so they make a greater contribution to monitoring the quality of provision for which they are responsible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Key Stage 4 is generally above average but this is by no means a constant picture; data clearly indicates that this fluctuates erratically from year to year. Standards are above average and students make good progress. Standards are rising and are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection on all GCSE measures. Not only does the school perform better than average on the benchmark measure of 5 A* to C grades including English and mathematics, the proportion of students leaving with 5 A* to G and 1 A* to G grades respectively has risen strongly and are much higher than the national picture. This demonstrates the commitment of the college to inclusion. The College has established greater consistency in subject performance since the last inspection and has been largely successful in ensuring that weaker subjects have improved. However, there is still room for improvement in the respect of the standards attained and the progress students make in English which are not as good as other core subjects. Students benefit from the broad range of subjects offered at Key Stage 4. In particular, their attainment is strong in vocational courses and this makes a significant contribution to their overall achievement. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well being are good. Relationships between students are good, which results in classrooms which are calm and conducive to good learning. In lessons and around the college, students show positive attitudes and are well behaved. However, when teaching is insufficiently dynamic and students are not engaged in their learning, attitudes are not as good as they could be. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All students take a qualification in citizenship. Links with a Zambian school and a multi-faith forum ensure that their understanding of other cultures is well developed. Students work daily alongside adult learners from MENCAP and students from a local special school, which results in an excellent awareness of diversity in society.

The college has developed a rigorous approach to the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE). As a result, students appreciate the value of healthy eating and exercise and many take part in the extensive range of extra-curricular sporting activities on offer. As a result of the work of the student council, the dining facilities have improved 'dramatically'. Many now stay on the premises at lunchtime and enjoy a range of healthy options. All students feel safe from bullying or harassment. Those that had experienced bullying say it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Enterprise days and the college's development of careers education ensures that students' economic well-being is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with some that is outstanding. This is why students make good progress across the college. Teachers display good subject knowledge. Where lessons are good or outstanding, they are well planned, ensuring activities are varied and challenging for students. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and through carefully targeted questions students are engaged in their learning. Relationships between staff and students are good. Furthermore, students are given opportunities to discuss issues in pairs and small groups, using subject specific vocabulary which develops their literacy skills. Teachers use technology to good effect as well as a variety of stimuli such as poems and video which promote speculation, extend discussion and analytical thinking. These features of good teaching impact on students' behaviour and help them to achieve well. Where teaching is less effective, lessons tend to be more teacher dominated and students are not given opportunities to be involved in their learning through well matched tasks or to solve problems in groups or pairs. This restricts the pace of progress for a minority of students. The quality of marking of students' work is generally good, although there are some inconsistencies across the college. On occasions, teachers leave brief comments on how students should improve their work, but on the whole they receive detailed feedback on their work with clear targets for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It clearly reflects the aims of the college, enhancing students' personal development, their enjoyment of education and extending their knowledge of the world. The college uses its technology specialist status very well to enrich and extend learning opportunities at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, both within and beyond the school day. An outstanding feature of the curriculum is its flexibility. Its quality and relevance is evaluated very effectively and students' interests and needs are kept paramount. Hence, the college goes to great lengths to satisfy individual combinations of courses and subject choices on entry to Year 10. If vulnerable or disaffected students begin to struggle, sensitively tailored provision is made for their needs to bring them back on track. Effective transfer arrangements with the nearby Key Stage 3 school enable students to make an effective start to their new courses in Year 10. Learning alongside students from a special school considerably enriches students' personal development. A further strength of the college is its commitment to applied learning. The college offers an increasing variety of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 which extends choice, increases relevance and promotes higher achievement. These courses provide students with clear progression routes to the next stage of their education or to the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All students are regarded as individuals and their needs are met accordingly. There are outstanding procedures which ensure that all safeguarding requirements are in place. Excellent relationships exist with the many outside agencies with whom the college works. Students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and because of effective and well targeted support they make good progress. Transition arrangements with the local school for 11 to 14 year olds are strong and developing and ensure that students settle quickly into their new college even before their official starting date. Existing students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or for the world of work. The college has developed sophisticated and effective systems to track students' progress so that students know at what level they are working, what their targets are and what they need to do to achieve them. This is beginning to have an impact on standards. Parents are regularly updated on students' progress and reports help them to understand how they can support their children's learning.

Academic guidance is generally good with some good examples of evaluative and informative marking designed to help the students to improve. However, the implementation of agreed policies with regard to quality of marking is inconsistent across the college.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The principal provides good leadership. He is highly regarded by parents, staff and students who acknowledge his commitment to enhancing the life chances of all students. This is achieved through a strong sense of care for each individual that promotes self-esteem and produces confident, well rounded learners that exhibit good working habits. This is one of the many reasons why students make good progress and attain high standards. A key feature, effectively championed by the principal, is the use of partnerships to further students' well-being through, for example, the Education Improvement Partnership with a neighbouring school, membership of a School Sports partnership and work with outside agencies.

A strong sense of teamwork exists at all levels and is helping to drive forward initiatives. This has contributed to the progress that the college has made in addressing issues identified during the previous inspection. The college senior leadership team provides good support to the principal. They have a strong collective presence around college and this impacts on students' personal development. The senior leadership team has an accurate understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. This is because systems to monitor overall performance are an integral part of college management. Senior leaders demonstrate a determination to bring about continuous improvement and this is reflected in carefully focussed development plans. Subject leaders, some of whom are relatively new in post are aware of what needs to be done in order to improve provision further, but require support to develop the skills needed to bring change about. The governing body is extremely supportive of the college and proud of its' achievements particularly in recent years.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Annex A**The quality of provision**

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	



3 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Northallerton College, Northallerton, DL6 1DD

As you will be aware, your college has recently been inspected. I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave us and the manner in which you conducted yourselves throughout the two days. The team spoke with many of you during the inspection during lessons, at breaks and as you were moving around the college. We were impressed with your behaviour and general levels of courtesy and consideration. We also took on board many of the things that you said about the college. I am writing to tell you about our findings. You told us that you thought that Northallerton was a good college and we agree.

These are some of the areas we judged to be at least good:

- the leadership demonstrated by the principal and the senior leadership team
- standards of attainment and the progress made by students
- the quality of teaching which contributes significantly to the progress you make
- the extent to which the college works in partnership with other providers to promote your well-being
- your positive contribution to the community
- standards of behaviour
- the level of care, guidance and support given to all students

The principal and senior leadership team have a good understanding of what is good about the college and what can improve it further. We have asked them to make two particular improvements.

- Raise standards and achievement in English further at Key Stage 4.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders so they make a greater contribution to monitoring the quality of provision for which they are responsible.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all success for the future.

Christopher Keeler
Her Majesty's Inspector