

Northfleet Technology College

Colyer Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 8BG

Inspection dates

24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' attainment has improved well since the last inspection so that their performance in external examinations is close to the national average. No matter what their starting points are, students make at least good progress in their learning.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and almost all continue with their education because the courses which they follow have been tailored well to meet their needs
- Students behave well because of the very positive relationships across all of the school community. They are polite and considerate to adults and each other and feel very safe at school. Attendance is above average.
- A good start has been made in settling into a new building. Students say this has helped improve their achievement and behaviour. One student commented that 'this school opens doors', referring to his increased opportunities for learning.
- Teaching and learning are typically good. Staff have high expectations for students' achievements and ensure that lessons give enjoyment and reward to students. A good curriculum engages and interests students well.
- The school is very well led. School leaders, including the governing body, are rigorous in improving the school overall. Staff agree that the school is going in the right direction and they work well together to put the vision into practice.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although there is much good and some outstanding teaching, a few lessons are less effective because teachers do not always take enough account of the needs of different students or check students' progress through the lesson.
- While students' speaking and reading skills are improving well, there are not enough opportunities for students to improve their writing across all their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 35 lessons or part lessons, of which six were joint observations carried out with senior leaders. In addition, an inspector visited several lessons with a middle leader to monitor pupils' literacy skills. Inspectors spent time around the school site at break and lunch times, talking informally to students.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of students from each key stage, and representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors also reviewed school improvement documentation, achievement information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at samples of students' work. The school's record of safeguarding checks on staff was also scrutinised.
- The inspection team considered 41 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of the views of staff, including those expressed in 72 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Hugh Betterton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Barker	Additional Inspector
Helen Hutchings	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized, non-selective secondary school in an area where some students are selected for grammar school places. It has specialist technology status.
- Sixth form provision is made in partnership with other local schools under the umbrella of the Gravesham 14–19 consortium.
- The school meets the current government's floor target which sets minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has recently undergone an extensive rebuilding programme and moved into a new building in September 2010.
- The proportions of students who receive support at school action plus, or who have a statement of educational needs, is well above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium grant (additional government funding to support students in local authority care or who are eligible for free school meals) is above the national average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds, although small numbers are drawn from a range of other heritages, with very few at the early stages of learning English as another language.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - making sure that learning accurately takes account of students' achievement in earlier lessons
 - reinforcing students' writing skills by making sure that students regularly make a written record of their discussions in group work
 - checking students' understanding of new learning during the lessons so that tasks can be adapted, where necessary, or learning moved on more quickly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with starting points that are below national averages, particularly in their numeracy, reading and writing skills. Many have a range of complex emotional and social needs. Because of students' keen desire to learn, and good teaching, almost all students make good progress.
- Since the previous inspection, students' attainment has risen rapidly and the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades has increased faster than nationally. The school achieved its best ever GCSE results in 2012, and these provisional results are close to the national average.
- Lesson observations show that disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well as a result of well-targeted support and carefully-designed interventions from well trained staff. Leaders have a clear strategy for the support allocated to students eligible for the pupil premium so they overcome barriers in their learning. As a result, their progress, as measured by average point scores at GCSE level, is accelerating faster than other students, and there is no significant difference in their attainment.
- The early entry to examinations is used effectively to motivate students by enabling them to achieve success at an early stage. Care is taken to make sure that students achieve the grades expected of them through carefully increasing support for them to study effectively. Students achieve well in the courses offered as part of alternative provision.
- In lessons, students achieve well and enjoy learning. In the best lessons, they make very good progress because they develop a deep understanding of what they are learning. In a Year 10 English lesson, students wrote detailed responses to themes from *Educating Rita*. A well-structured discussion about the role of women was skilfully linked to a writing task where students justified their opinions and made rapid progress editing their writing using laptop computers.
- Students develop their reading well throughout the school, and many show a great enjoyment of reading. Those students who have difficulty with their reading are quickly identified and given the extra help they need. Students' writing skills are more variable and some younger students do not always present their work carefully or complete all their written tasks.
- Students joining the sixth form have generally lower attainment than other students following the same courses nationally. They achieve well because of effective teaching and their own commitment to doing the best they can. Most achieve pass grades in academic courses. Performance in the wide range of vocational courses is above average.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice, including in the sixth form. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations of what students can achieve. For example, in a Year 8 physical education lesson, students made outstanding progress in developing their attack and defence skills in handball due to the very high expectations of the teacher, clear planning, and highly effective checking of understanding and progress. Students successfully used correct vocabulary to analyse their own and others' work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, and use this to explain new work clearly and in a lively way which interests students. They have good relationships with their classes. They successfully use praise and encouragement to boost students' self-confidence and to motivate students to try hard. In many lessons, teachers use questioning well to check students' progress and intervene where necessary. One student spoke of 'teachers doing all they can to help us improve', giving up their time for the benefit of students, from running revision classes to providing individual help.
- The use of information technology is effectively improving students' independent learning skills which students use to improve their understanding of different topics.

- In many vocational lessons, teachers include practical examples of how workplace skills are important, for example following safety rules in workshops and the need for punctuality to work, linking them directly to business and industry needs.
- Occasionally, tasks in lessons are too easy for some students, with all expected to tackle similar work, which slows the pace of learning for some.
- Reading, speaking and listening are taught well in specialist English lessons and in other subjects. However, the development of students' writing is not planned systematically across the curriculum. For example, students are not always guided to develop longer pieces of writing, and some spelling mistakes are missed in teachers' marking.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Staff, parents and carers and students, including in the sixth form, are definite that the standards of behaviour throughout the school are good. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive in nearly all lessons.
- Students are punctual, have very good manners, and behave well to create a safe, orderly school environment shown in good-natured relationships. Because students are proud of the new building this has had an upbeat impact on behaviour.
- Students' attendance is above average. Prompt action to support students in attending school regularly has led to a significant reduction in the numbers who are persistently absent. Some students who had previously not attended regularly have been encouraged by the better surroundings and their attendance has increased.
- Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying through the emphasis given to it in Year 7 GLAS (Great Learners Are Successful) lessons, assemblies, and community time sessions. They take steps to tackle it when it occurs, including reporting it to adults, and are confident that it is dealt with. They have a very good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Instances of bullying and inappropriate use of racist or homophobic language are infrequent.

The leadership and management are good

- A very effective transition into the new school buildings has ensured that almost all aspects of the school's work have improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher and her senior leaders have high aspirations for students, so planning and development concentrate on actions to promote confidence, self-belief and achievement. Teamwork is strong across the school because of a shared sense of direction and purpose.
- School leaders check progress rigorously, systematically covering all aspects of the school's work. This information is used well to plan further developments. Improving teaching further is a high priority for them. Observations of teaching by senior and middle leaders, alongside analyses of their impact on students' progress, lead to the good quality feedback and further training given to staff about how to improve. However, occasionally, subject leaders' monitoring focuses too much on the teaching methods used and does not look closely enough at what students have learnt.
- The school has used support from the local authority effectively. Advice and guidance have been targeted well to improve teaching.
- The curriculum is very well planned to meet students' needs. For example, students spoke of how the Great Learners Are Successful curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has made them more independent in their learning. The curriculum for older students, including in the sixth form, enables them to follow a good range of academic and vocational courses, and its effectiveness is reflected in the better results achieved. In addition, a small number of students benefit from a range of well-chosen off-site provision which has led them directly into further education or employment. Very few students leave school without progressing directly into further education, training or

employment.

- The school's technology specialism has a significant impact on learning, particularly through the practically based courses such as engineering, and improves attainment for a growing number of students. The widespread, well-planned use of information technology also promotes students' progress very effectively.
- Leaders and managers are making good use of pupil premium funding, which is having a positive impact on raising standards. For example, the effective use of additional staffing to support several students in Years 9 to 11 has boosted their performance and means that they are meeting, and some are exceeding, the challenging targets set for them in English and mathematics.
- The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is securely mapped into subject teaching and through assemblies and tutor times, so students emerge as very well-rounded young people. Procedures for safeguarding students meet current government requirements and there are robust arrangements in place for checking staff and other adults.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has changed its procedures to make it more efficient. Governors have undertaken training to ensure that they can interpret data about students' attainment and progress accurately and their understanding of how their work impacts on the school is improving. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors ask searching questions of senior and middle leaders about how they are improving the quality of teaching. They ensure that key policies are in place, are reviewed regularly and meet requirements in crucial areas such as safeguarding and the promotion of equal opportunities. They monitor finances closely to ensure resources are used effectively to achieve value for money. This includes ensuring that how well teachers are paid aligns closely with students' achievement and the quality of teaching.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118928
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401975

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	975
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Clark
Headteacher	Jane Partridge
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2010
Telephone number	01474 533802
Fax number	01474 536122
Email address	office@ntc.kent.sch.uk

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