

# Seaham School of Technology

Burnhall Drive, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 0EN

**Inspection dates** 26–27 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Governors, leaders and staff share the headteacher's passion to ensure every child succeeds. This has resulted in key areas from the last inspection having been well tackled.
- There have been sustained improvements in achievement, teaching and students' behaviour since the time of the last inspection.
- The proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding has increased. Inadequate teaching has been stamped out.
- Students are happy, they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They are proud of their school and feel that there have been major improvements in behaviour and teaching since the last inspection.
- Much of the teaching motivates students as there are plenty of opportunities for them to work independently as well as collaborate with each other.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers feel valued and appreciate the emphasis put on professional development. Teachers understand that they are accountable for students' progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough students are consistently making better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Attendance needs to improve further for some groups of students.
- Not all teaching and marking matches the practice of the very best within school. There needs to be even more teaching that is at least good or better.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons including some joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors dropped into a further six lessons briefly to sample the quality of marking. Observations of other aspects of the school’s work were also made, including attending an assembly and a registration period.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and teaching staff, as well as a representative from the local authority. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Questionnaire returns from 44 staff were analysed.
- Inspectors took into account evidence from the school’s own survey of parents and students as there were insufficient responses from the Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, minutes of meetings of the governing body and reports from the local authority school adviser.

## Inspection team

Philip Smith, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Cathryn Kirby

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Heather Scott

Additional Inspector

Colin Scott

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Seaham School of Technology is an 11-16 school and at the time of the last inspection in March 2011 was judged to be satisfactory.
- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Almost all the students are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium is funding provided by the government to support pupils who are looked after by the local authority, those who are eligible for free school meals and those who have a parent serving in the armed forces).
- The proportion of students supported by school action is broadly average but those who have statements of special educational needs are above that seen nationally.
- The school has a formal link with Sunderland College, providing post-16 provision at The Headways.
- The school has been shortlisted for the last two years at the national Education Business awards and won the best school award at the Heritage Awards.
- School results meet current government floor standards, the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality and consistency of teaching further so that even more is good or better by:
  - teachers sharing and learning from the very best teaching within the school, especially in the use of marking, to promote students' progress
  - ensuring that teachers adapt their questioning so that more students in lessons are encouraged to give detailed and considered responses
  - ensuring that all teachers consistently deliver lessons that meet the learning needs of all students including the most able
  - making sure that all teachers in lessons regularly and effectively check the progress of all students and use this information to inform their teaching.
- Continue to improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - reducing the levels of absence of some groups of students so that they meet at least national averages
  - ensure that systems to improve teaching are refined further so that they focus even more sharply and precisely on specific aspects of teachers' practice so that more teaching becomes outstanding.
- Ensure that the impact of the above actions narrows further the remaining achievement gaps for some groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals and those who have the ability to achieve the very highest grades in English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Students join the school with below-average starting points. Year 11 students' achievement in 2012 was, overall, in line with national averages. This demonstrates good progress.
- In lessons students make good progress. Careful tracking identifies quickly when different groups of pupils or individuals fall behind and learning support gets them back on track.
- The school is using a range of strategies to promote students' literacy skills, including reading through the use of electronic devices in the library. Inspectors observed that in some work students were actively responding to teachers' marking to correct and improve spelling. Others benefitted from a good intervention session that improved their punctuation and grammar.
- The gap between the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals and that of their peers is closing as a result of judicious use of pupil premium funding and the strengthening profile of teaching.
- The needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs within the school are being well met. Effective support in lessons, well-planned use of additional adults within classrooms and effective tracking and intervention have seen good rates of progress, and this is set to rise further in 2013 (based on unvalidated data).
- The choice of subjects students can study has contributed to the improving picture of achievement across the school because it is carefully matched to individuals' interests and abilities. Students themselves recognise and appreciate the choice of student pathways.
- There is early entry in mathematics for some Year 10 students. This does not stop them from sitting the examination again in Year 11 so that they can achieve the highest possible grade.
- However, examination outcomes varied between subjects and courses. Performance is stronger in vocational courses than in GCSE. The proportion of students attaining A\*-A grades was significantly above average in science and significantly below average in English and mathematics. Achievement is improving but is not yet outstanding because consistently high standards in all subjects have not been reached or sustained over time.
- The school uses an external support unit to manage the behaviour of a small number of students and this is effective in improving their behaviour and progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Over time, teaching has been rapidly improving to ensure that students make good progress. The proportion of good and better teaching is much higher than at the time of the last inspection. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated.
- In the large majority of lessons teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers generally plan well so that students are usually actively involved in their learning and there are often many opportunities for them to work together and share ideas. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson students took turns to read and remember key points from an information sheet on Jack the Ripper. They then talked excitedly about what they had recalled as they shared findings with their group.
- In the best lessons enthusiastic teachers generate a purposeful atmosphere. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson on using pie charts students made excellent progress as a result of their positive attitudes and the teacher's careful and regular checks for learning. Other adults in the classroom worked highly effectively to support the learning of some students.
- On those fewer occasions when teaching requires improvement, it is often characterised by too much teacher talk that leads to students becoming too passive and so their progress slows. Some teacher questioning does not always engage enough students in the class and too few contribute.

- In some lessons teachers do not always use the data they have on students to make sure that the needs of all students are met. This can sometimes result in work that is too hard for some students and too easy for others. As a result, in these lessons students can sometimes lack interest and occasionally show lower levels of concentration.
- Scrutiny of students' work across the school shows that most teachers are providing students with regular feedback on the quality of their work, with some paying particular attention to the teaching of literacy. An area of inconsistency in a generally positive picture is that not all students respond to the helpful feedback given, and learning opportunities are therefore lost.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students have positive attitudes towards school. They are proud of their school and this is reflected in the way they behave. They arrive on time and are ready to learn. They are polite and courteous and there are high levels of mutual respect. Older students said that levels of behaviour and attitudes to learning had improved significantly since the time of the last inspection.
- Students are often willing to support each other in lessons; for instance, in one mathematics lesson a student said to his classmate, 'If you don't know how to do this, I can help you.' These improvements have been due to the hard work and effort that the school has put into making teaching more exciting and making sure that misbehaviour is dealt with quickly and consistently.
- The school offers a safe environment and students say they feel safe. Students said that bullying, including homophobic bullying, was rare, that they knew who to go to within school and that it would be dealt with effectively. School surveys of parents also showed that they consider their children are safe in school and that any rare cases of bullying are effectively dealt with.
- The levels of persistent absence have reduced significantly over time. This is due to the effective strategies the school is using to establish high levels of expectation coupled with good individual support to make sure students achieve well.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because attendance is not improving fast enough for some groups of students. Attendance is lower for some groups of students including those eligible for free school meals and those supported by school action plus. Case studies reviewed during the course of the inspection highlight the significant individual challenges some students face in attending school regularly. Nevertheless, the school recognises that overall attendance needs to improve quickly so that it is at least in line with the national average.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is passionate and committed to improving the outcomes of all students in the school. This is a school where every child really matters. This passion is shared by his senior team who provide skilful and knowledgeable support. Leaders and managers across the school spoke of the "vast change in the leadership of the school" since the time of the last inspection and their desire for the school to succeed.
- The leadership and management of teaching have been effective in driving up the quality of teaching and progress. Since the time of the last inspection leaders' actions have improved the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, eradicated inadequate teaching and improved students' achievement and progress in many areas. Unvalidated results for 2013 suggest that these improvements are set to continue.
- The senior leaders within the school are building capacity from within by "growing their own" future leaders and managers. There are examples of how leaders within the school are benefitting from working in partnership with other schools in the area, attending valued leadership training and learning from some of the best teachers within the school.
- Performance management is rigorous and robust. Staff performance is regularly monitored by senior leaders working alongside subject leaders. Salary progression is dependent upon fully

meeting the teachers' standards and agreed targets which include targets for student outcomes. The school tackles underperformance to ensure that all students get the best possible deal.

- Leaders provide teachers with effective training and, as a result, teaching is improving. This is welcomed by staff and means that training is increasingly addressing the development needs of teachers. This strengthening provision promotes well students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The management of funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is effective as it shows how interventions have been used to make a positive impact on the progress of this group of students. It is no coincidence that the unvalidated 2013 results show that some of the gaps in achievement have narrowed.
- The subjects students study are well matched to their needs. There is good use made of both academic and vocational courses. This provides students with real choice, which students say they appreciate. The school does have an early entry policy for some Year 10 students but this is not limiting their potential, as 2012 GCSE mathematics results show that greater proportions of students were successful in achieving higher grades after they sat the examinations in Year 11.
- Lesson observation feedback needs further refining so that it focuses more sharply on improving specific aspects of teaching to ensure even more teaching is good and outstanding. Feedback to teachers does not always focus precisely on how teachers can improve, for example, the quality of questioning and their use of assessment so that they all meet the standards of the very best within school.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school. Governors receive two visits from the local authority educational development adviser each year plus an annual report.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows the school very well through a good system of committees and monitoring procedures. Governors have received training on how to be more challenging and have a better understanding of school data. As a result, they are prepared to challenge if they feel that students' progress is not sufficient. They also keep a close eye on the impact that the pupil premium funding is having on improving outcomes for eligible students.
  - Link governors to various departments within the school provide useful reports to the rest of the governing body on the progress these departments are making.
  - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and performance management. They are fully aware of how salary progression is linked to outcomes for students and are involved in the decisions when some staff do not progress.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114286
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	400088

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	853
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pauline Ramshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Shield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5161600
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