

Farringdon Community Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108858
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324848
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Elaine Colquhoun

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 on roll	
School (total)	886
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Peter Gibson
Headteacher	Mr David Thornton
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
School address	Allendale Road Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR3 3EL
Telephone number	0191 5536013
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Farringdon Community Sports College is a smaller than average Secondary School which successfully gained specialist status for sport in 2002. The overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage and only a small number have English as an additional language. There are above average numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the number of students in receipt of a full statement of special educational need (SEN) is comparatively low. The school includes specialist provision for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The school is in receipt of several national awards including Sportsmark and Healthy Schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Farringdon Sports College is a good school with some outstanding features, in particular for its working in partnerships and for the Special Educational Needs provision. Strong leadership by the headteacher in the face of budgetary constraints and falling student numbers, resolutely steers the school to success. All staff are committed to raising standards and improving outcomes and opportunities for students. The school's specialist status is a strength of the school providing exciting curriculum opportunities for students to gain accreditation in subjects linked to the sports specialism. It also provides genuine opportunities for students to experience the world of work through effective business and academic links. Students achieve well because of good teaching and effective guidance. Teachers use good assessment data to plan effectively and their good subject knowledge ensures a swift pace to lessons and accurate marking. This combines well in guiding students to the next levels of their work. Pastoral care and support for the individual needs of students are good so that any potential barriers to students' learning are tackled successfully. Standards are average and achievement is good. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved since 2006 with students achieving higher standards in English and science; standards are broadly average in mathematics. Standards at Key Stage 4 have also improved and are above average overall, however, performance is less strong for students achieving five A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics. The school recognises this and is committed to improving standards. Close tracking and monitoring of student progress leads to targeted intervention through the setting of groups for some subjects and providing individual counselling for those students experiencing personal difficulties. These strategies are already having a positive impact on improving rates of progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress and the provision the school makes for these students is outstanding. All are fully included in the academic and social life of the school and their achievements at all levels are praised and celebrated.

Students are courteous and behave well. They understand the consequences of the behaviour for learning strategy and respond positively to the high expectations set by the school. Learners enjoy school and their attendance, whilst satisfactory, is improving. They understand the issues within their immediate community but provision for their understanding of wider faith and cultural issues in Britain are less well developed.

Governance is effective, the governing body hold the school to good account and share the commitment to raise standards. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve student attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics.
- Improve the students' knowledge and understanding of the diversity of cultures and religions in 21st century Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and achievement is good. Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average with weaker performance in their levels of literacy. This has led to some underperformance in the past.

Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved steadily since 2006. Unvalidated results for 2008 indicate that standards are above the national average in English and science, and in line with the national average in mathematics.

Standards at Key Stage 4 have improved steadily since 2006 and the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades is well above the national average. However, the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics is well below the national average and attainment in these subjects has been particularly low in the past. The school has done much to tackle these weaknesses. For example, close tracking and monitoring of student progress, targeted intervention and early entry to GCSE examinations. These efforts are having a significant impact on raising achievement and standards throughout the school. As a result, the school has compelling evidence indicating that students' progress at Key Stage 4 is now good. Students currently in Year 11 are on track to make good progress in 2009 and achieve well. Students currently in Year 10 are on track to make even better progress and to meet challenging targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress. Achievement in the specialist school subjects is significantly above that achieved nationally particularly in PE, dance and drama.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is good. Parents and students agree that incidents of bullying and racism are rare and are dealt with promptly and effectively. Students are generally considerate and are responding well to the school's high expectations of manners and courtesy. Students understand the new behaviour for learning strategies and the fairness of staged consequences to their actions. Instances of serious misconduct are infrequent. Consequently, the use of exclusion as a sanction is low. Students get on well with each other and with staff. They enjoy coming to school, and it is a friendly, well ordered community. Attendance is improving steadily and is now in line with national figures.

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. However, students' understanding of wider cultural issues in society is less well developed. The school actively encourages healthy living through the powerful impact of its specialism and the wide-ranging opportunities to take part in sport and exercise.

An effective school council represents the views of students and contributes to improvements within the school. Students have a good understanding of their responsibilities to the school and its wider community, for example, through their regular charity fundraising, and through the good opportunities to develop and exercise their leadership skills. Parents are pleased with the way that the school helps students develop as individuals, and strongly endorse its work in this area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, representing clear improvement since the last inspection. The majority of lessons are well planned, providing a consistent high level of challenge to students. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching methods which are well matched to the

learning needs of the students. On occasions, teachers can spend too much time on the introductory element of the lesson. In these cases, students can lose interest and concentration falters somewhat. However, relationships at all levels are good and students consistently behave well in lessons.

Teachers have good subject knowledge which ensures a swift pace to lessons and accurate assessments are made as to how well the students are performing. Teachers' marking of students' work is effective in most subjects and provides the necessary information for them to reach the higher levels. All students are aware of their current academic targets as to how to further improve their work. Teachers monitor students' progress effectively and this high quality information is regularly shared with parents and carers. Teachers' use of ICT is effective in capturing the students' interest and encouraging their increasing independence as learners. This ensures that private study and homework time is used efficiently and leads to good progress being made.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has been significantly developed since the last inspection for example, through the introduction of the Pathways system. This enables greater flexibility for students to follow a curriculum appropriate to their needs and allows for more opportunities for individualised learning. As a result, achievement and standards for the majority of learners has improved. More able students access learning opportunities which accelerate progress and lead to some gaining early entry for GCSE examinations. Additionally, a wide range of vocational courses is offered at Key Stage 4. This includes opportunities for students to experience apprenticeships in partnership with outside providers. This has resulted in a greater match in meeting the needs of learners and the local community. Provision within the curriculum for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. The learning support team operates effectively, enhancing provision for vulnerable students by tailoring the curriculum to meet their individual needs. Specialist Sports College status has resulted in a greater variety of sports related courses offered to students. They respond well to this provision achieving high standards in these specialist related subjects. There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported and appreciated by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of students are good. Staff have a strong concern for, and commitment to, students' welfare. The recently revised pastoral arrangements offer good guidance to students who feel secure in this well ordered community. Students say they feel safe and procedures for child protection are in place and understood by staff. Systems for risk assessment, including those for out of school visits, are thorough and well managed. Required checks for ensuring the suitability of staff to work with young people are properly in place.

Comprehensive support is successfully provided for vulnerable students and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, through, the nurture group, the learning zone, and specialist provision for autistic students. Teachers, support workers and others link effectively with outside agencies to give these students constructive help and support. Close links with primary schools ensure a smooth transfer of students into their new school. Older students receive thoughtful guidance about subject choices and their career opportunities. Good use is made of recently improved data systems in tracking students' academic and personal

progress. Students understand their targets and know to improve to achieve them. Those learners who are making insufficient progress are identified quickly and given effective support. Parents and carers are satisfied with the level of care and guidance provided by the school.

Careers advice, work experience, the strong provision for vocational courses at different levels, and the established partnerships with local employers and other training providers mean that students gain useful skills and knowledge to support them when they leave school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection, demographic changes have led to a significant reduction in student numbers by over 20%. In the face of these challenges, the school manages changes to staffing and resources in close partnership with the local authority to minimise adverse effects to the budget. Consequently, the school currently provides satisfactory value for money. The head teacher has a clear vision for the school's development and improvement. This is successfully communicated to all staff who understand that they are accountable for the success of each individual student. Senior leaders have a clear perspective, sense of purpose and commitment to high expectations for all students. This ensures that the school is moving effectively through its current cycle of improvement. Honest and thorough self-evaluation ensures that the school has a good understanding of where it is successful and where it needs to improve further. Recently implemented staffing structures enable effective delegation of responsibility and provide clear lines of communication at all levels. Middle leaders are well supported by the senior leadership team and are beginning to develop strategies which are designed to bring about further improvement. However, this is not yet fully embedded in some subject areas. Governors play an important part in the school's improvement. They fully understand its strengths and weaknesses, for example, they are involved in scrutinising the schools academic results and provide a good level of challenge to the school. Effective systems are used by all staff to set challenging targets for improvement.

The school works effectively with the immediate community, particularly in their role as a specialist sports college. Whilst students have a clear understanding of their role within their immediate community, their knowledge of wider implications of race and religion in Britain is less secure.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

7 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Farringdon Specialist Sports College, SR3 3EL

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your college. We enjoyed meeting you and learned a lot about Farringdon from the discussions we had with you in meetings, lessons and around the school. We know you think the school is good and we agree with you. Here is what we found;

- you attend a good school and all students and members of staff should be proud of this achievement
- you are well cared for by the staff and you look after one another
- the teachers know you very well and, in particular, how well you are doing in your learning. They support and challenge you to continue to improve your work
- the way you are taught and learn has improved and is now good
- your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and you enjoy all the opportunities the school offers
- the school provides a good curriculum and a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport
- the school is well led and managed.

As with any school, there are some improvements needed so we have asked Mr Thornton and his team to ensure that:

- you make better progress, particularly in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4
- you fully understand issues about race and religion in Britain in the 21st century.

You can help your school by maintaining your good behaviour and working closely with the staff on your English and mathematics.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Colquhoun

Lead inspector