

Ullswater Community College

Wetheriggs Lane, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 8NG

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- It has improved substantially in a relatively short space of time. Students of all ages and abilities achieve well in a very wide range of subjects and courses.
- Above average GCSE results reflect the good progress that students make. The sixth form is good and enables students on AS, A-level and vocational courses to achieve well.
- There is a good atmosphere for learning in all year groups.
- When students have not made expected progress, the school provides very effective teaching to enable them to catch up.
- Teaching is either good or outstanding in the large majority of lessons, and continually lifts students' attainment.
- Students behave well and relate very well to their teachers and visitors to the school. They say that there is almost no bullying or poor behaviour. This is why exclusions are very low.
- Students' attendance has improved to broadly average levels and persistent absence reduced.
- Arrangements for students' health and safety are good.
- Parents are happy about the quality of education that the school provides.
- The headteacher, the senior team, governors and middle managers are particularly effective in ensuring that teaching and students' achievement continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school has not yet reached the stage where all teaching is good and more frequently outstanding.
- Although teaching is good overall, there is still some which requires improvement because it does not ensure students learn as much as they should, particularly the most able.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, including three joint observations with the headteacher and his senior team.
- They looked carefully at a wide range of students' written work, especially in Years 9 and 11.
- They held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, representatives of the governing body, members of staff, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at many documents including the self-evaluation, development planning, records of students' attainment and progress and safeguarding procedures.
- They took account of 86 responses to the on-line (Parent View) questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Paddick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Lesley Powell	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector
Doreen Davenport	Additional Inspector
Brian Hill	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ullswater Community College is a larger than the average sized secondary school and has a large sixth form.
- It serves an extremely large catchment area of around 600 square miles.
- Almost all students are White British.
- A greater than average proportion of students is supported through school action. Proportions of students supported through action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for around 12 students with special educational needs; these relate to severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those looked after by the local authority.)
- A small number of Year 11 students attends an engineering course at Kendal College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is in the process of applying to convert to academy status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching and eliminating any which requires improvement
 - using the current outstanding classroom practice to show teachers how it is possible to reach the highest levels of effectiveness in the classroom
 - ensuring that teaching always stretches students' thinking and pushes all to do their best, particularly the most able
 - ensuring marking provides clear guidance on how to improve and that effective systems are established for checking that students follow the advice given and improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well in a wide range of GCSE, AS, A-level and vocational courses. On entry to Year 7, students have below average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. Nevertheless they gain GCSE results which are above the national average. Students achieve well in their academic and vocational courses in the sixth form.
- GCSE results in 2013 rose substantially compared to 2012. Around two thirds of students gained five good A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, compared to approximately half of Year 11 in 2012. GCSE results in English and mathematics were above average in terms of the proportion of students with A* to C grades. The most-able students gain the highest grades.
- In 2013, the results showed that there was a considerable gap between the performance of the majority of students and those known to be eligible for free school meals; at the end of Year 11, less than half of the eligible students gained five GCSEs at A* to C grades. This gap in performance has now closed in the current Years 10 and 11 because the school has used its pupil premium funding well in providing extra teaching for students at risk of underachievement.
- Results at AS and A-level have risen for the last three years. Results for grades A* to E were broadly average in 2013 but below average at grades A and B. Vocational course results were broadly average. Achievement is good because most students complete their courses, progress well from their starting points and move to further education, apprenticeships or employment.
- The school provides well for the most able at AS and A-level. For example, an A-level further mathematics group revealed very high standards of academic achievement from students who have been offered university places.
- The school has an outstandingly robust system for tracking students' progress. It shows that current students in Years 10 and 11 are progressing at least as well as the 2013 cohort and in some respects better than that. This includes the most able, disabled students and those with special educational needs. Good promotion of equal opportunities is reflected in the way that the tracking system quickly identifies any students who are not reaching their targets, and triggers effective extra help for them.
- In the large majority of lessons students of all abilities, including the most able made good progress in a wide range of subjects. Where teaching was outstanding progress was exceptionally rapid, for example in English, French, geography, physical education, drama and art. Occasionally, however, students progressed too slowly.
- Year 11 students on the engineering course at Kendal College are making good progress. They are enthusiastic and can explain in detail how they have made cannons and other items out of a range of metals. They know how to use a range of hand tools and machines and understand that accuracy and good quality finish are vital if they are to achieve the highest grades.
- Students in the strategic resource base with severe learning difficulties achieve well because they are taught effectively by specialist teachers and assistants. These students often participate fully, with support, in mainstream lessons.
- Scrutiny of students' written work shows that they take a pride in the way that they present it. Writing has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Students express themselves well orally and on paper in a wide range of subjects, particularly the humanities. Numerical, algebraic and trigonometric skills have also improved.
- The school has no plans to enter any students early for GCSE this year.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection in response to effective management initiatives and staff training. Teachers demonstrate fully the characteristics outlined in the National Teaching Standards. Teaching is good in all year groups including the sixth form. This improvement is responsible for the rising GCSE results and for the successes in the sixth

form in AS, A-level and vocational courses.

- Typically, teachers create a positive learning environment where students are attentive and cooperative. They plan lessons well so it is clear what students are going to learn and how they are to build upon and consolidate their current knowledge and understanding. As lessons proceed, teachers and their assistants manage students well so that they move from one activity to another without taking too long. Relationships between teachers, their assistants and students are universally good.
- In the great majority of lessons teachers ensured that students of all levels of ability were enabled to make good progress. Good questioning deepened knowledge and understanding and quickly identified and explored concepts that students found difficult. Good planning meant that teachers had thought out how to move students' learning forward. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their explanations are clear so students know what is expected of them.
- Inspectors observed outstanding teaching several times. On these occasions, learning was extremely rapid and the quality of students' work was very high. For example, in a drama lesson in Year 8 where progress was outstanding, groups of students performed in an exceptionally compelling manner which had the spellbound audience fully engaged and wondering what was coming next.
- Where learning was not as brisk, there were a few occasions where the most-able students were not being adequately challenged by work which failed to stretch their thinking. Consequently, they did not do their best.
- The marking of students' work has improved but there is still some variation in practice. There is some excellent marking in English which clearly identifies where students can improve their work. Teachers then routinely follow up the advice given to ensure that students have made improvements, such as writing out spelling corrections. In A-level mathematics, there are excellent examples of test papers being marked very accurately and students doing corrections. Students themselves value this approach and derive great benefit from it. Some marking does not provide students with enough information about how to improve their work and there is a lack of procedures to ensure that students make good use of the feedback they are given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the case in lessons, when students move around the school and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Students are welcoming and helpful. Frequently, they are impeccably polite and well-mannered. In all year groups they behave well and display a mature and sensible attitude to learning. They are keen to do well at school and fully respect the adults who work with them. Occasionally, punctuality to lessons suffers slightly when students attend to mobile phones en route. Students know how to socialise effectively and relate well to teachers and their assistants. In class they play their part in ensuring that the atmosphere for learning is at least good. Very rarely, some students are restless in class when they become bored.
- Participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities is a strong feature of students' life at school. They are keen to take part in drama, music, sport, voluntary work in the community and visits to other countries. Older students display great maturity when they help the younger students to read, when they teach first aid skills and help young people through the school's links to an orphanage and school in Tanzania.
- Student perceptions gained through interviews with inspectors and the on-line parental survey strongly suggest that the almost consistently good behaviour that inspectors observed is typical of the school on a day-to-day basis.
- Attendance is improving in response to the considerable efforts of many members of staff. It has now reached broadly average levels and persistent absence is continuing to decline. Exclusions for unacceptable conduct are low, and support the concept of good behaviour at the school on a daily basis.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say that they feel perfectly

safe in school and enjoy their education. They fully recognise and value what members of staff do for them, especially if they have problems or are not meeting their targets. They fully understand how to keep safe and have learnt about a wide range of potential risks to their health and welfare, for example, in relation to the use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol and various types of bullying. They confirm that racist incidents and bullying are rare and that if they were to occur they have every confidence that staff would deal with them effectively. The school's own records confirm that they are indeed rare and that appropriate action has been taken.

The leadership and management are good

- Ullswater Community College has improved very quickly because the headteacher, senior team and governors have a relentless and effective focus on improving the quality of teaching and on ensuring that all groups of students do well at GCSE and on sixth-form courses. They are ably supported by leaders at all levels, including middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the head of sixth form, in ensuring that intended changes and improvements actually materialise. Middle leaders carry out their responsibilities effectively. Good leadership of the resource base ensures that the school caters well for students with the greatest needs.
- The school employs very effective methods for checking how well it is doing and for setting targets for improvement. Consequently, it has quickly moved from requiring improvement to now providing an education of good quality.
- Leadership of teaching is very effective in improving classroom practice. Leaders monitor teaching rigorously and provide teachers with appropriate areas for development. Performance management arrangements are robust and effective so the proportion of teaching which requires improvement is reducing substantially. However, there is still scope to make more use of the school's outstanding classroom practice to provide models and approaches for other teachers.
- Governors and leaders have considered very carefully how to provide the best possible curriculum for all groups of students. Consequently, students have the opportunity to choose from a very wide range of academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. The school has no plans to enter any students early for GCSE this year. Strong promotion of equal opportunities means that all groups of students do well and where gaps in performance become apparent they close quickly in response to effective intervention. Pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used very effectively to provide small-group and individualised teaching to ensure that these students make as much progress as others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effectively embedded into the curriculum and students benefit from a very large number of opportunities to be active in the community.
- Good quality information about the world of work and courses inside and outside school enable students to make the right choices when they come to the end of Year 11 and the sixth form.
- Safeguarding meets all requirements. Arrangements for checking on the identities of all adults who have access to students are outstanding.
- The support provided by the local authority has been appropriate for the school's needs and has helped the school to improve its performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very clear understanding of how the school is doing and they know what still needs to be improved. They ensure that managers are challenged when appropriate and ensure that performance management systems are effective. They understand how well all groups of students are achieving, have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and ensure that any salary progression is merited. They know how the school uses pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding, and have a clear understanding of how it has been effective in closing gaps in performance.

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	112393
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	439344

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1396
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Davis
Headteacher	Nigel Pattinson
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2012
Telephone number	01768 210206
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