



# Abbey Hill School Technology College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111787  
**LEA** Stockton-on-Tees  
**Inspection number** 278777  
**Inspection dates** 10 October 2005 to 11 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** John Atkinson

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Ketton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Hardwick Estate
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 8BU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 677113
<b>Number on roll</b>	230	<b>Fax number</b>	01642 679198
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr C Whittaker
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Vening

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11 to 19	10 October 2005 - 11 October 2005	278777

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Abbey Hill School and Technology College is a day special school. It has 232 pupils aged 11 to 19 from Stockton-on-Tees. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and five pupils have a first language other than English. Five of the pupils are in public care. There is a wide range of special need and a significant number of students present very challenging behaviour and complex learning difficulties. The school was awarded technology college status in 2003 and became a leading edge school in 2004. The school currently operates on two sites, although a new, purpose built facility for post-16 students will open in January 2006.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

Abbey Hill School and Technology College is a good school and parents and pupils rightly value the dedication and support of all of the staff. This judgement accords with the school's own self-assessment. All students achieve well based on their capabilities. By achieving technology college status, the school has put information and communication technology (ICT) at the centre of teaching and learning. This has resulted in great improvements for most students, whatever their needs. The outstanding curriculum is taught well. As a result, students are highly motivated to attend school and strive to do their best. The well-being of each individual learner is at the heart of what the school does. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership. Inspection evidence supports the school's own identification of its strengths and weaknesses, including the need to use middle managers more effectively, to tell learners what they need to do to improve and to set challenging targets for them. The staff work very well as a team and have a genuine desire to develop teaching and learning so that standards can be even higher. The school has improved well since the last inspection and it has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

**Grade: 2**

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

The post-16 provision is good. Again, this matches the school's accurate self-assessment. The curriculum is outstanding because a wide range of courses is available to meet the individual needs of students. They are given outstanding guidance and support to find future college places and employment opportunities. Teaching is good and the relationships between adults and students are excellent. These promote a mature and ambitious response from students who grow in self-confidence as a result. Leadership and management are good, and students are achieving well in their courses and in their personal development. The area for improvement is to set even higher targets for more able students.

**Grade: 2**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Use middle managers more effectively to monitor, support and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Use assessment data on students' prior achievements to improve lesson planning and set challenging targets for the more able students.
- Provide written feedback on students' work to tell them what they have to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

The standards of students' work cannot be compared with all schools nationally but most students do achieve well in terms of their capabilities. All students make good progress against the targets that are set out in their individual education plans and there is no underachievement by any particular group. The progress in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics is good and this contributes to the school's success in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and other accredited courses in the sixth form. Post-16 students understand the importance of gaining qualifications in order to improve their opportunities to secure employment and training and so to be able to earn a living for themselves. The staff are very keen to celebrate the achievements of all students and have aspirations to raise these even higher. However, teachers' ambitions are not always fully realised because they do not always use the evidence of prior attainment to set targets which are challenging enough for higher attaining students.

Students achieve particularly well in ICT because of the outstanding resources, the good teaching and the high expectations. For example, Year 8 students produce good multimedia presentations including animation and imported images. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well because teachers monitor their progress very carefully, identifying the tiniest response and evaluating what triggered it so that they know which strategies are the most effective. Where the school has identified dips in achievement, for example, in spelling in Years 10 and 11 and mathematics in Year 9, it has taken specific action to deal with them and students' progress is closely monitored.

### **Grade: 2**

## **Personal development and well-being**

Students' enjoyment in their learning and their appreciation of the wide range of opportunities provided for them is evident throughout the school. Vulnerable students who have in the past found a school environment too challenging are keen to share their views that, 'this is the best school'. Several initiatives undertaken by the school have resulted in a rise in attendance, which is now good. The excellent relationships between staff and students are a major strength of the good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff ensure that students have a clear understanding of the effect of their behaviour on others. They understand the sanctions that will be used and they agree that these are fair. Students who find it difficult to behave well give personal examples of how they have been helped to manage their own behaviour and so improve their ability to learn. Student council members are confident that their views are listened to and are proud of the contribution they make to the school's decision-making process.

For example, the contribution post-16 students have made to the consultation process regarding the move to the new building has given them the confidence that it will be a smooth and successful transition.

The future economic well-being of all students is central to the work of the school. The interests and aptitudes of each student are reflected in the opportunities provided for learning. Teachers ensure that students have a full understanding of how their learning will benefit their life out of school both now and in the future. Safe and healthy lifestyles are promoted well and students are provided with a wealth of opportunities to practise what they learn about the benefits of regular exercise. This is not always the case in terms of healthy eating which the choices provided in the school tuck shop do not always encourage.

**Grade: 2**

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good overall and staff want to make them even better. Teachers plan very well to meet individual needs and have a good understanding of the individual targets for students. They work very effectively with teaching assistants and, as a result, students are given good support, concentrate throughout lessons and behave well. There is very effective use of specialist subject teaching and students benefit from the expertise of staff in many subjects. This is particularly evident in the high standards of art seen through out the school and the ways in which ICT is used to make lessons more exciting, relevant and accessible, particularly for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Teachers are skilled at finding ways of motivating and gaining the interest and attention of students with the most difficult behaviour and needs. For example, the innovative and structured approaches to students with autism result in real gains in both learning and behaviour.

In the best lessons, students are aware of what they need to achieve by the end of the lesson, the lesson has good pace and the activities are challenging for the different abilities in the class. Where teaching and learning are only adequate, students have too much time to practise skills that they are already able to do and there are insufficient opportunities for them to be challenged further.

**Grade: 2**

### **Curriculum and other activities**

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. There is an effective emphasis on ensuring that students acquire the basic skills to enable them to learn well across all

subjects. The specialist teaching facilities are good and students are motivated and interested in all subjects as a result. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 prepares them well for the outstanding vocational and training opportunities made available in the post-16 provision. A significant strength of the curriculum is that it captures students' interests and motivates them so that they want to come to school and learn.

The enrichment of the curriculum is also outstanding. It provides many opportunities for sporting, recreational and vocational success. For example, the school received an international school award and the Silver Healthy School award. Students make residential visits in this country and abroad and talk enthusiastically of how these experiences have made a difference to their lives. Students also have many opportunities to take part in enterprise challenges and understand the requirements of being a good employee through well planned and selected work experience.

**Grade: 1**

### **Care, guidance and support**

Students, including the most vulnerable, are well cared for. Staff are committed to providing a high level of care and this is evident in the comprehensive risk assessments made for individual students. The effective partnership and high esteem in which a wide range of outside agencies hold the school show the effectiveness of this part of the school's work. Child protection systems are secure and well understood. Intervention and support in lessons by both teaching and non-teaching staff strikes the right balance between ensuring that students gain independence and that they make progress in their learning. Staff talk to students about the progress the students are making but they do not extend this by using written guidance to set further targets for the most able students.

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the school, including its governance, are good. This matches the school's own view. The headteacher is energetic, creative and, with his team, has brought about many changes since the last inspection. This has resulted in greater opportunities to both the staff and students to make learning more effective through a diverse, highly relevant and well resourced curriculum. The leadership has created a strong culture of professional development amongst the staff and this has enabled them to understand the complex needs of individuals and

groups of students. The monitoring and development of the quality of teaching and learning by middle managers is underdeveloped and, as a result, some lessons are only adequate rather than good.

The senior leadership team is open, honest and reflective when assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It is therefore accurate in its analysis of how good the school is and what it needs to do to get better. It engages effectively with parents and students and regards their involvement and opinions as critical to the future success of the school. The very close relationship with the governing body has harnessed that group's expertise, particularly in finance and performance management, in planning new initiatives and evaluating the improvements in the school. This unity has fostered a strong sense of vision and commitment to the school which underlies the impending provision of the new accommodation for post 16 students to the same standard of the rest of the school.

**Grade: 2**

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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14 October 2005

Dear Students,

Linda and I really enjoyed the two days that we recently spent in your school. Thank you for making us welcome, ensuring that we didn't get lost (!!) and sharing your opinions about the school with us. We hope the new building for post-16 students is a real success and allows you even better opportunities to do well.

We agree with your views that you go to a good school because of the many strengths it has.

The staff are very interested in you and always want you to do your best.

They expect you to behave well and work hard – and you do because you enjoy school.

You have many opportunities to get ready for when you either go to college or hopefully find a job.

The school works closely with people who can help you to do better, such as speech therapists and physiotherapists.

The headteacher and staff are always planning ways to make school better for you.

We had a long chat with the headteacher and other staff and we agreed that there are two things to do to make your school even better.

Teachers should work with each other to make all the teaching exciting and good.

Even though you work hard we want teachers to set even harder work for some of you so that you really push yourself to do the very best.

We know how much improvement you have made since going to Abbey Hill and if you give your very best in every lesson, you will help the school to become one of the very best.

John Atkinson (Lead inspector)

Annex B