

Tabor Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115231
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357716
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll	1064
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Findlay MacBean
Headteacher	Steven Clark
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 59 lessons, taught by 55 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of documentation and met with groups of students. The inspection team reviewed 162 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. A total of 150 student questionnaires were evaluated. The school had recently completed a staff questionnaire of its own and HMI reviewed the analysis provided.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.
- The nature of the academic standards secured and the current rate of student progress.
- The quality of teaching and how it is impacting on student progress.
- The curriculum provided and its impact on standards.
- The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average secondary school. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The ratio of girls to boys varies annually. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is a third of the national figure, and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is low.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national figure and so is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. There are a small number of children who are looked after by the local authority.

The school has specialist status in science and mathematics and has received a number of national accreditations including Eco School; Fair-trade School; the Healthy School Award and the International Schools Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to: the learning and progress of all groups of students; consistency in the quality of teaching; and the use of assessment to support learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups have been well below average in recent years, although outcomes in English and mathematics have improved and are satisfactory. The proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010 was below the national average although on a slowly rising trend. Outcomes in science and modern foreign languages have improved since 2009. Overall, the progress students make remains well below that expected nationally although their progress in English and mathematics is satisfactory.

These inconsistent outcomes have a direct connection to inconsistencies, observed by inspectors, in the quality of teaching and noted by the headteacher in his accurate self-evaluation. Weak teaching failed to focus on the quality of learning expected and did not engage students. In the lessons observed by inspectors, one in six lessons was judged to be inadequate which was in direct contrast to the one in five outstanding lessons observed. Where provision was ineffective: lessons did not focus on the quality of learning; the assessments of students' achievement to inform teaching was used inconsistently within departments; and teaching failed to focus on developing subject-specific literacy skills. However, in an outstanding Year 11 science lesson on the relationship between temperature and pressure, vibrant teaching had students on the edge of their seats with the realisation that they were likely to be required to conduct or respond to the next part of the lesson.

The curriculum opportunities provided are satisfactory, with a clear progression from options in Years 8 and 9 to GCSE. There are developing strengths in the school's specialist areas of science and mathematics. Very good connections have been established with the Braintree sixth form of which 40% of its student body are former Tabor students. This good example of community cohesion is the result of outstanding partnership working between the schools and particularly their governing bodies. Consequently, the proportion of the Tabor students who remain within education, employment and training has improved significantly.

The care, welfare and guidance provided are good: parents, carers and students were quick to praise the wide range of support available. Inspectors found behaviour to be satisfactory and often encountered well-mannered individuals who moved promptly around the school. Attendance has improved and is average.

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Governance is good. The reorganised governing body has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development and there is a regular programme of departmental reviews. The partnership work with Braintree Sixth Form, led and managed by governors and senior staff, has significantly enhanced the educational opportunities for Tabor students.

The leadership team's efforts to embed ambition and drive improvement have been satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive. Senior staff have secured improvements in English, mathematics and science, and in attendance. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the learning and progress of all groups of pupils by:
 - eliminating inadequate teaching
 - using outstanding teaching as a professional model for all colleagues.
- Ensure that the assessments of students' achievement are used consistently to inform teaching across all subjects and all year groups.
- Review provision in all subject areas to ensure:
 - a clear focus on the quality of learning,
 - subject-specific literacy is developed consistently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Attainment on entry is below average. Overall, standards at the end of Year 11 have been well below the national average for the last three years. However, results in English and mathematics have been broadly average and the proportion of higher grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics is now close to the national average. Examination outcomes outside of the core subjects of English and mathematics have been inconsistent across the rest of the school's provision for the last three years, although standards are rising in modern foreign languages and science.

The progress made by students known to be eligible for free school meals and by those who find learning difficult is similar to, and in some instances better, than their peers. Overall, progress is unsatisfactory except in English and mathematics where provision has been more consistent.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirror the variations evident in the most recent examination results. Where the learning environment is challenging the students' display a positive attitude to learning: where learning fails to engage they are generally compliant, although disruptive behaviour was observed. Outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn.

Students and their parents and carers are very positive that students feel safe in school and inspectors observed constructive relationships between students and staff to support this view. The school provides effective support for a healthy lifestyle: a wide range of school meals is available and the proportion of students engaged in sport is high. The

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students' contribution to the school and wider community is good, with notable support for eco-trading and local charities.

The students' workplace and other skills are satisfactory. They apply their basic skills securely in a range of contexts, attendance is average and rising and punctuality is good. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with strong social and moral views expressed in class discussion.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. The inconsistencies evident in the students' attainment and progress are a reflection of the variations in challenge and engagement provided for students in lessons. The strengths of teaching included: effective use of the examination board grade criteria, good subject knowledge; positive relationships between teachers and students; skilful questioning which probed students' understanding; enthusiastic and committed delivery; and effective marking. The use of assessment to inform teaching and learning was the key inconsistency. In the weaker lessons, the match of task to students' learning need lacked precision or an appropriate focus. Teaching often provided few opportunities for the students to engage orally in the lesson to show what they knew, understood and could do.

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The curriculum is satisfactory and improving with an appropriate range of courses and a programme of intervention and support. The school's two specialisms, mathematics and science, alongside English, are delivering results in line with the national average.

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is valued by students, parents and carers. The students speak highly of the work of staff that has made a difference to their lives; wide ranging inter-agency support is effective. Academic guidance is part of a programme built on mixed-age tutorial provision that has yet to contribute to higher standards.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a well-structured team of senior and middle managers who have satisfactorily embedded ambition and driven improvement. The key improvements secured in the core subjects, attendance, behaviour and the students' engagement in employment, education and training are solid achievements that confirm the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. Governance has been a key part of this and the reorganised governing body has a clear grasp of the need to secure higher standards from the secure basis provided by the core subjects.

Engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory, although the Year 7 parents would welcome greater communication. The outstanding partnership working that has secured the development of Braintree Sixth Form, and the substantial post-16 access it provides for Tabor students, is a strength of effective community cohesion and a credit to all involved. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory: the weakness and strengths of provision impact on all students impartially. Safeguarding procedures are good. The school's contribution to the local sixth form has been secured without cost. The school provides strong pastoral provision and satisfactory outcomes in some areas. However, the inconsistencies in teaching and inadequate learning and progress of students result in the school not providing value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

The views expressed by parents and carers were very positive with nearly 90% happy that their child enjoys school; almost all felt the school kept their child safe. Most parents and carers agreed that the school was led and managed effectively and 94% were happy with their child's experience at this school. The results of the pupil questionnaire matched that of their parents and carers but were more positive regarding the work of staff to support them and the way the school was led and managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tabor Science College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 162 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1064 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	30	94	58	13	8	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	58	36	100	62	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	25	98	60	15	9	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	25	97	60	18	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	20	111	69	5	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	15	114	70	14	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	17	110	68	15	9	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	22	107	66	7	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	24	107	66	10	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	20	101	62	15	9	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	15	103	64	11	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	31	95	59	9	6	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	33	99	61	5	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Tabor Science College, Braintree, CM7 5XP

It was a pleasure to inspect your school just before the Easter holiday. We were greeted with courtesy and helpfulness, thank you. We were pleased to see how attendance and behaviour has improved.

Many of you took time to explain how much you valued the good care, guidance and support you receive from the school and this was judged to be an important strength of the school. We were very impressed by the efforts made by the school and governing body to help develop Braintree Sixth Form and we were very pleased to hear that 40% of students come from Tabor.

We were pleased to see that you make appropriate progress in English and mathematics and that your results in science and modern foreign languages are improving. That means you can do better in your other subjects if the school provides the same level of challenge for you across the curriculum. Your school has been given a 'notice to improve' because significant improvement is required in the learning and progress of all groups of students. This means that an inspector will come and check on the progress the school is making in then a full inspection team will visit the school about this time next year.

I look forward to hearing about your future success.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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