

The Trafalgar School at Downton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number126447Local AuthorityWiltshireInspection number360084

Inspection dates 5–6 July 2011 **Reporting inspector** Chris Wood HMI

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

Type of school Comprehensive
School category Foundation
Age range of pupils 11–16
Gender of pupils Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll 573

Appropriate authority The governing body

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Introduction

This inspection was conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 31 lessons taught by 29 teachers, most of the teaching staff who were available to be seen. This included seven joint observations with school leaders. During the inspection, meetings were held with school staff and five members of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors talked to students in lessons and tutor periods. They also met with 44 students who represented the school's diversity and the school council. Inspectors scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, policies, improvement plans and documents relating to the tracking of students' progress. They also analysed the responses to questionnaires returned by 169 parents and carers, 81 students and 40 members of the school staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The rate of progress made by all students, particularly middle and higher attaining students in Key Stage 4, to ascertain whether teaching is appropriately adapted and/or sufficiently challenging.
- The extent to which the school's care, guidance and support has promoted quickly improving outcomes for all students, particularly in terms of their well-being and attendance.
- The extent to which the curriculum, including the school's specialism, has led to strongly improving outcomes for students, particularly in terms of their achievement.
- The extent to which the actions of leaders at all levels has led to 'exceptional improvement' when compared to the 'most stretching of benchmarks'.

Information about the school

The Trafalgar School at Downton is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is about half the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of educational needs, is similar to that seen nationally.

The school has held specialist status for performing and visual arts since September 2005. From September 2011, students in Years 7 and 8 will follow the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. This will be rolled out across other year groups in future years.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Trafalgar School at Downton is a good school that is exceptionally well led. All aspects of its work are improving very strongly. The forward-thinking and determined headteacher is very well supported by dedicated school leaders and a vibrant governing body. Parents and carers rightly hold the school in high regard. The number of students on roll has risen as a result of its well-deserved reputation. One parent spoke for others when stating, 'My child has blossomed at this school. He has grown in confidence and his results have demonstrated that he is learning well.' Inspectors endorse this view. Students make good progress at the school. By the time they leave in Year 11, their attainment is broadly average. However, attainment and the rate of progress made by students are improving at a rapid rate. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has improved at a much faster rate than seen nationally. In 2010, attainment in mathematics and science was above average. Students had made outstanding progress in these subjects. Students also achieved very well in the specialist subjects and modern foreign languages. Although attainment in English dipped, inspection evidence and the school's accurate tracking of students' progress indicate that the overall trend of very strong improvement is set to continue across all subjects.

Care, guidance and support and the school's arrangements for keeping students safe are outstanding. This is underpinned by excellent partnerships and a relentless focus on promoting equality of opportunity. Students often flourish in this nurturing and aspirational environment. They feel exceptionally happy, safe and cared for in what they describe as a 'friendly', 'welcoming' and 'family-like' school. Students make a first-rate contribution to the life of the school and wider community, developing into courteous and well-rounded individuals. They reflect very keenly on a wide range of ethical issues and demonstrate a finely-tuned and open-minded appreciation of cultural diversity. Innovative changes are being made to the good curriculum. Consequently, it is improving strongly. In particular, these improvements have created meaningful links between different subject areas. Teaching is good and the proportion of outstanding teaching has increased. The impact of the school's specialism can be seen very clearly in the practical, collaborative and creative approaches that teachers plan. In the best lessons, students make rapid progress because activities are very well matched to their needs and feedback helps them to understand precisely how to improve their work. Nevertheless, in a few lessons, the pace of learning drops because students are not moved onto the most challenging work quickly enough. In some instances, this is because the success criteria that teachers share with students are not sufficiently focused on the higher level skills they need to demonstrate in order to achieve their most ambitious targets.

The school has good systems in place to provide parents and carers with information about their children's achievement. In particular, the tick, star, cross, known within school

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

as the 'TSX' system, offers parents and carers regular updates about the progress children are making. Nevertheless, some systems, such as 'Parent Place' which provides online information about student achievement, are relatively new and will take time to embed before they can be more widely accessed. Moreover, whilst the governing body is well informed about the views of parents and carers, it has not yet used this information systematically to inform the school's strategic priorities for development.

The actions that leaders take are rooted in accurate self-evaluation, highly ambitious targets and a relentless drive to enable students to be 'best in the world' at whatever they choose to do. Together, leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed fully. In particular, the role of middle leaders in driving school improvement has developed significantly. The impact of their work can be seen in the quickly improving quality of teaching and the excellent care, guidance and support that the school now provides. Other aspects of leadership have developed very strongly and there have been discernible year-on-year improvements to student achievement. This is now improving rapidly. Taking all of this into consideration, there is outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that the progress made by students accelerates further, by ensuring that:
 - teaching enables students to tackle the most challenging work more quickly
 - success criteria explicitly identify the higher level skills that students need to demonstrate in order to achieve their most ambitious targets.
- Enhance the opportunities that parents and carers have to engage with their children's learning, by ensuring that:
 - the good systems the school uses to inform parents and carers about their children's achievement are fully embedded and widely accessed
 - the governing body uses the information that it collects about the views of parents and carers to better inform the strategic direction of the school's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Since 2008 the proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has risen by 16% compared to 6% nationally. In 2010, the school achieved its best ever results. Overall, students made good progress. However, the progress made by students in mathematics and science was outstanding. Whilst attainment in English dipped, leaders acted very quickly to ensure that the achievement of current students is firmly back on track. In lessons students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Their progress is improving rapidly as a result of the impressive changes to the curriculum and the quickly increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. The progress made by middle and higher attaining students is also similar to their peers. Students apply themselves conscientiously when working independently or in groups. Their behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary. In one outstanding drama lesson, for example, students worked with a high level of professionalism that contributed strongly to their excellent progress. In a small number of

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

lessons, where the pace of learning drops, students can become restless. The students' good achievement and their above average attendance prepare them well for their future education and careers.

The contribution that students make to their community is excellent. They discharge their roles as school councillors and representatives at governing body meetings with great maturity. Inspectors were impressed by the manifestos written by candidates for head boy and girl. There are high levels of participation in community events and fundraising activities. Many students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Arts Award that involve significant community service. Recently, students visited a school in a more diverse catchment area to learn from the way it organises its learning. Citizenship days and an annual arts week are highly regarded by students and help to foster their excellent awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Students feel exceptionally safe and trust their teachers to help them resolve any problems that arise. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and most try to adopt these. There is good participation in sport. Inspectors noted students' enthusiastic preparation for sports day and were disappointed for the school when a downpour curtailed its completion. The rain did not, however, dampen the students' high spirits and good nature.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and improving quickly. Of the teaching observed by inspectors, 84% was good or better of which 16% was outstanding. In the best lessons:

- teachers plan activities that are practical, imaginative and challenging
- teachers' questioning effectively extends students' thinking and understanding
- regular use is made of assessment criteria to help students evaluate their own and each other's work
- successful use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the quality of learning
- meaningful links are made between the skills and knowledge students learn across different subject areas.

In a few lessons the rate of progress made by students is slower. This is because students are not moved quickly enough onto the more challenging activities that teachers prepare. In some of these lessons, the criteria used to help students evaluate their own progress do not focus sufficiently on the higher level skills that will enable them to reach their personal targets.

The good curriculum is improving quickly as a result of well-devised changes and through trialling innovations such as the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. Students currently benefit from a good balance of academic and vocational routes. The curriculum contributes very strongly to their personal development. It is highly flexible when meeting individual needs. For example, whilst students who have a physical disability are fully included in physical education lessons, they also receive specialist coaching. The performing arts specialism contributes positively to the curriculum and cross-curricular provision in literacy, numeracy and ICT is particularly well embedded. Students enjoy the good enrichment activities that are on offer and benefit from the educational trips they go on. Nevertheless, some of the most exciting changes to the curriculum are new and have not yet had time to impact fully on raising achievement.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students feel exceptionally safe and cared for because adults are highly responsive to their personal needs. This is underpinned by the work of tutors, heads of house and other support staff. Arrangements for students who join the school in Year 7 are exceptional. Inspectors noted a tangible buzz in the school during the Year 6 introduction day. Parents and carers appreciate the excellent support provided at this time. One parent echoed the views of others when commenting, 'The transition from primary school to secondary school was so well managed that my child, who is quite shy, felt welcomed, was able to fit in very quickly and is happy at school.' Parents and carers receive clear information about their children's progress and there are well-attended events that provide help with options and post-16 pathways. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very closely monitored. The school has rightly focused on working with the small number of students who find it difficult to attend school regularly. It has clear strategies in place to ensure that the impact of this work is sustained.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher. She is able to rely on the tireless support of leaders at all levels. Their work is underpinned by excellent partnerships that contribute fully to the students' good, and quickly improving, achievement and their often outstanding personal development. Over time, leaders have been actively involved in setting up and/or coordinating many of these partnerships. Staff are hardworking and rightly proud of their school. They are very clear about the school's priorities. Middle leaders feel empowered. This is due to the way the school organises teachers into cross-curricular faculty teams and the enhanced role middle leaders play in monitoring provision. They now have increased opportunities to share best practice and learn from each other. Consequently, there have been rapid improvements to their leadership, to the quality of teaching and to the rate of progress made by students in lessons.

The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge. Its members are reflective and have a wide range of skills and expertise. It participates actively in all aspects of the school's work and has close links with staff and students. Parents and carers have good opportunities to engage with school life. The school has good systems to keep them informed about their children's achievement. However, some systems are relatively new and will take time to embed. Moreover, whilst the governing body has evaluated the recently collected views of parents and carers, it has yet to establish a regular system for using this information to inform the school's strategic development.

The school promotes community cohesion well. The impact of its work within the school and local community is exceptionally strong. Leaders are now beginning to evaluate the wider impact of their work more closely. The school has excellent systems for keeping students safe. Statutory requirements for safeguarding are met in full and training is of a high quality. The school has taken a leading role in setting up a local multi-agency forum that is focused on the early identification of those students and their families whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. The school's work in promoting equality of opportunity and high levels of inclusion is exceptional. Students play their part in this process and were fully involved when formulating the school's values or 'pillars', which include the importance of mutual respect and community. The school celebrates diversity and tackles any rare incidence of intolerance firmly. As part of its work on equalities, the school has given a high profile to all types of discrimination, including homophobic bullying. The school also enjoys a well-embedded tradition of working successfully with students from Traveller backgrounds. It actively promotes their culture and seeks to encourage their families to participate fully in school events.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1	
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	2	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination		
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures		
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money		

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was higher than average. The issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the headteacher and the governing body during the inspection. Most parents and carers are very happy with their children's experience at the school. Almost all agreed that their children enjoyed school, were exceptionally well cared for, and that teaching is good. Inspectors endorse this view. One parent spoke for others when saying, 'We could not be happier with the school and all aspects of the pastoral care and education. You are a person not a number here.' A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Their written comments commonly referred to particular examples of bullying. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good and inspection evidence, including feedback from students, indicates that such incidents are rare. Other written comments referred to poor communication between the school and home and variations in the quality of homework. However, other parents felt that these were areas of strength.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Trafalgar School at Downton 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 169 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 573 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Stro agı		Ag	ree	Disa	gree	Stro disa	ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	51	74	44	9	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	92	54	72	43	2	1	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	87	51	67	40	15	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	47	74	44	12	7	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	70	41	89	53	7	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	33	93	55	13	8	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	28	102	60	13	8	1	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)	73	43	79	47	7	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	41	83	49	15	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	37	72	43	19	11	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	37	85	50	8	5	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	97	57	66	39	3	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	56	62	37	7	4	3	2

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	46	48	6	0	
Primary schools	6	47	40	7	
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11	
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3	
Special schools	28	49	19	4	
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10	
All schools	10	46	37	7	

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 suc	ccess of a pupil in their learning,
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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: 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.

■ 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.



7 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Trafalgar School at Downton, Salisbury SP5 3HN

You may remember that I visited your school recently with a team of inspectors. We enjoyed meeting you and were grateful for your help and warm welcome. I am delighted to say that you go to a good school that is improving all the time. The care, guidance and support that you receive are outstanding. Because of this you enjoy school, feel extremely safe, and develop into courteous and well-rounded young people. You make excellent contributions to the community through your fundraising, your roles as school councillors and through participation in programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Inspectors were impressed by the manifestos written by prospective head boys and girls. Good luck to all candidates.

You achieve well and your attendance is above average. Since the previous inspection you have been doing better in your GCSE examinations. Overall, your attainment is similar to students nationally, but last year you did particularly well in mathematics and science. This means you are well prepared for your future education and careers. You make good progress in lessons because teaching is good. An increasing proportion is outstanding. You enjoy the opportunities you have to do practical work and appreciate the different styles of imaginative teaching you experience. In a few lessons, however, the pace of learning drops because you don't get onto the most challenging work quickly enough. The good curriculum is supported well by the school's specialism. It helps you to see the links between different subjects and to apply the skills you have learnt in new contexts. You really enjoy citizenship days and the arts week which contribute strongly to your excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. You understand why it is important to stay healthy and most of you try to. Inspectors noted how enthusiastically you prepared for sports day and were impressed that the sudden downpour that affected the event did not dampen your spirits. Your headteacher and school staff do an excellent job. This means that they know what needs to be done to make the school even better. We have agreed that it would be a good idea to make sure that:

- You receive even more outstanding teaching so that you can achieve your most aspirational targets.
- The school helps your parents and carers to feel fully involved in the school and uses their views to help shape future improvements.

You can help by continuing to attend regularly and working hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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