

Tabor Science College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115231
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	385857
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2012
Lead inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1042
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Findlay MacBean
Headteacher	Steven Clark
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2011
School address	Panfield Lane Braintree CM7 5XP
Telephone number	01376 323701
Fax number	01376 345834
Email address	admin@taborscience.com

Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	3–4 May 2012
Inspection number	385857



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional inspector
David Whiteside	Additional inspector
Natasha Campbell	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors undertook 39 formal lesson observations of 36 teachers. These were supplemented by tours of the school and making short visits to additional lessons. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, middle leaders and classroom teachers, including newly qualified teachers and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the 75 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 48 returned by staff and 150 returned by students. Inspectors also considered the reports from recent external reviews.

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 percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language are low. The proportion of students supported by school action plus is a little above the national figure and so is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. There are a small number of children who are looked after by the local authority.

National accreditations include Eco School; Fair-trade School; the Healthy School Award and the International Schools Award.

At the previous inspection in March 2011, the school was given a notice to improve, because it was performing significantly less well than, in all the circumstances, it could reasonably be expected to perform. Inspectors subsequently visited the school in December 2011 to monitor its progress. Since the March 2011 inspection, there have been changes in the structure of the senior leadership, and some teaching staff have left the school. The school meets the current floor standards that are the minimum standards expected by the government.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school, which is improving strongly. In a little over half of lessons, students make good and sometimes exceptional progress from their starting points. It is not yet good because students' progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 is still average, leading to average attainment, and there is too much variation in the quality of teaching. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The achievement of students is now satisfactory. Students arrive in Year 7 with attainment that is below average. Following a history of underachievement, recent examination results confirm the school's own monitoring information, that students are now making at least expected progress leading to average attainment.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Over half of teaching is good or better with around a fifth that is outstanding. Lessons are characterised by very positive relationships between teachers and students. Whilst marking is regular, it sometimes lacks precise details about next steps for improvement. The majority of teachers make good use of learning time, responding well in planning their lessons to keep students engaged through a range of activities.
- Behaviour over time is good. Inspectors found the school to be calm and well ordered. The vast majority of lessons were well focused and students were engaged in their work. Often their positive contribution enhanced the lesson's quality. Arrangements to ensure students' are safeguarded are very thorough and secure.
- The leadership of teaching and the management of performance have brought about important improvements. Staff training over the last 12 months has had

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

a highly positive impact. Leaders have been successful in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching, the curriculum and attendance. Despite these improvements, the impact of the monitoring of teaching is still not consistent throughout the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and the quality of learning further by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations and consistently challenge students of all abilities, especially the most able, to increase the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE
 - there is greater consistency in marking with higher expectations of written work
 - teachers consistently use well-focused questioning to check all students' understanding and to extend and deepen their thinking
 - there is a greater emphasis on subject knowledge acquisition to ensure that students have key subject information to answer examination questions
 - teachers consistently promote communication and literacy skills across all subjects
- Reduce further the variation in performance between different subjects and teachers by for example better sharing of good and excellent practice that exists in the school.

Main report**Achievement of pupils**

A very small proportion of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Of those that did, almost all reported that their child is making good progress at school. Results from Parent View were very similar. Students made above average progress from their starting points during the majority of lessons observed by inspectors. This concurs with records of observations by the school and the local authority. In the large majority of lessons, students were very keen to learn and engaged enthusiastically with a range of activities. There were good resources to support a variety of learning activities. Lessons were usually conducted at a brisk but appropriate pace.

There was sometimes good promotion of literacy development both through marking and through teaching in the lessons but this was not consistent across the school. There was regular reference to the examination mark scheme and examination skills, especially in Years 10 and 11. Good support for students from teaching assistants was observed. Observation by inspectors confirmed that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress that is at least in line with that

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

made by other students because their needs are met well. Whilst the attainment of all groups has increased this year, boys' achievement has risen more sharply. The analysis of the performance of all groups showing no underperformance is an example of the school's commitment to tackling discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities.

The school's use of monitoring data has become robust and, supported by their GCSE results from early entries, indicates that currently Year 11 is on track to make a substantial rise in the proportion of students making expected progress, bringing it into line with the national average. The history of underachievement culminating in the poor results and progress seen in summer 2011 has been arrested and reversed.

Quality of teaching

Following effective professional development for teachers and robust action by senior leaders, the quality of teaching is now satisfactory. Observations by inspectors were in close agreement with the school's own profile of teaching quality. All but one respondent to Parent View reported that their child was taught well and most students reported that they learn a lot in lessons most of the time.

There are several aspects of teaching that are typical across the school. Lessons are well planned with an emphasis on what students will learn by the end of the lesson. Staff have good relationships with their students and consequently the class environment is conducive to learning. There is also good support for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs. Where teaching is good or outstanding, teachers use questioning effectively not only to assess students' knowledge, but also to address higher level thinking skills so that students reflect and evaluate their work. However this is not consistent in all lessons.

Work is often adapted well to meet the needs and interests of lower and middle ability students but the level of expectation for the more able students is not consistently high enough. The school has a focus on ensuring as many students as possible gain at least a grade C at GCSE, but sometimes there is relatively less emphasis on securing the highest grades. Occasionally, there is too much emphasis on examination technique at the expense of embedding knowledge and subject specific skills so that students have a secure platform from which to answer examination questions successfully.

The quality of feedback on marked work is inconsistent. For example, there is very good practice in the history department. Students are made aware of their weaknesses and are given specific advice as to how to improve. In some other subjects examples were seen of more cursory marking with little follow-up. The extent to which teachers develop students' literacy and communication skills in all subjects is variable. Some examples were seen of highly skilful communication development but in other lessons opportunities were missed. This has resulted in some students being reticent to read aloud. The school library has taken positive initiatives to encourage all students to read.

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactorily promoted by teachers in lessons, for example through giving the opportunity to discuss drugs and cheating in sport in a physical education lesson.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The conduct and behaviour of students are good. Students are respectful of each other and students of different ages get on well together. This is partly because of the mixed-age tutor group system, but also the unusual teaching arrangements in Key Stage 4 where students from Years 10 and 11 are taught in the same groups. One parent told inspectors, 'I have been really impressed by how well they have helped my daughter to settle in and make a smooth transition. Her first year here has been a very happy one where she has been encouraged to try hard and also to be rewarded for doing well.'

Students told inspectors that bullying is rarely an issue and if an incident did occur they had confidence in adults to report it, knowing that there would be a speedy resolution. Indeed a parent, typical of many, commented, 'I have not experienced or heard of any bullying issues although we have had letters sent home with directions if we have any concerns'.

Surveys of parents, carers, staff and students confirm the observations of inspectors that behaviour is good. Behaviour seen in lessons was overwhelmingly good. The parents' and carers' questionnaire for this inspection did raise some concerns regarding behaviour in lessons. Inspectors held further interviews with students and staff to explore this issue. Students told inspectors that there is some low level disruption in some lessons but it is rare. All but one respondent to Parental View agreed that their child was happy, safe, that behaviour was good and that bullying was not an issue. All respondents agreed that their children are well looked after.

Whilst some teachers have more difficulty in managing some challenging behaviour, the school is implementing effective strategies, both to support these teachers and to adapt the curriculum. Inspectors observed only occasional inappropriate behaviour.

Attendance has improved and is above average. Exclusions have decreased to zero because of the introduction of a 'shifted school' arrangement requiring some students to complete a full school day at a less social time than the bulk of students. This is proving effective. The 'star' system is also helping to improve behaviour.

Leadership and management

There has been a concerted approach to school improvement resulting in achievement and the quality of teaching rising from inadequate to satisfactory over one year. The headteacher inspires confidence not least as a role model in teaching. One student summed up the opinion of many, 'Mr Clark is well alright.' Since

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

receiving a notice to improve, the school has made effective use of partners such as the local authority and neighbouring schools and been receptive to advice. Indeed during the inspection, teachers were hungry for feedback and engaged inspectors in genuine dialogue concerning the strengths and areas for improvement in their lessons.

Decisive action by senior leaders and intensive support for less effective staff led by the best teachers have virtually eliminated inadequate teaching and increased the proportion of good or better teaching. There are several examples of teachers whose lessons had previously been judged inadequate that are now good or outstanding. Where teachers were unwilling or unable to improve, robust action has been taken. While the performance of the least effective teachers has been appropriately managed, the school is aware that the next step is to reduce the proportion of satisfactory lessons and increase the number of good ones. Both academic and pastoral middle leadership is now very effective.

Rigorous management of teachers' performance and intensive scrutiny of data by senior leaders are making all staff fully accountable for the standards achieved by students. This is tackling discrimination and ensuring equality. Systematic reviews of each subject, including a detailed analysis of students' progress and a thorough evaluation of each teacher's work, are presented to the governing body by middle leaders to illustrate their department's effectiveness. The governing body has been heavily involved in setting up and implementing accountability arrangements. Governors are highly effective.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a good focus on ensuring that students have opportunities to acquire the English Baccalaureate. New innovations such as the interesting option choices for Year 9, for example cooking or photography, have engaged students and increased their motivation. Beginning in Year 9, students gain GCSE qualifications through the flexible use of curriculum time so that by the time they begin Year 11 most students have experience of GCSE success. The Land-based Diploma has been used effectively offering some students the opportunity to begin advanced work early. All groups of students have a broad range of experiences that contribute well to their achievement. The curriculum successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with particular strengths in moral and social awareness. An unusual feature is the use of the communication system to broadcast a thought for the day message by a senior leader to students at the beginning of form time ensuring consistency of approach across the school. The upbeat end of day music broadcast later sends students off with a spring in their step.

The school has worked hard to engage parents and carers, by improving its communication with them. Most parents and carers returning questionnaires agree that the school keeps them informed, responds to their concerns and helps them to support their child's learning. Students were very positive about how much they are consulted and the influence they have. Student Leaders, Focus Groups, House Councils and Student Parliament all contribute significantly to changes for the better

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

at the school.

The school's self-evaluation is very accurate. All staff returning questionnaires agreed that the school is well led and managed and they were proud to be working at the school. Senior staff and the governing body show they have an extremely good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. This and the record of substantial recovery over the last 12 months provide strong evidence that the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Tabor Science College, Braintree, CM7 5XP.

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. We believe your school is a satisfactory and improving one. It has good features. You were really passionate about your school, your teachers and especially your headteacher. As a result of the improvements you told us about, we have decided that your school no longer needs a notice to improve and we would like to give our reasons.

Standards are rising and you are now making at least satisfactory progress. Teaching has greatly improved and the majority of your lessons are good. You value your opportunities to influence the school and help make it better. The school has developed very good systems for keeping track of how well you are doing. You know your levels and teachers help you understand how to improve. The school's leaders and managers have worked very hard to improve the school. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. There are still a few occasions when teaching is disturbed. You can all do your bit to ensure that other students' learning is not interrupted. We have also asked teachers to make sure that the lessons are always suitable, interesting and challenging especially for those of you capable of gaining the highest grades. Your attendance has improved and is good.

To make an even better school we have asked the leaders to help you by ensuring that even more of your lessons are good and by so doing raising your examination results further. Those of you in Year 11 have already taken some GCSEs and the display board in the foyer showed us just how well you are doing. Well done!

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**