

Trentham High School

Allerton Road, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 8PQ

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' achievement is inadequate because they do not make enough progress over their time in the school from their higher-than-average attainment on joining.
- The achievement of girls, middle ability students, and those supported through the pupil premium is inadequate.
- Teaching is inadequate over time, particularly in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. This has meant that students make inadequate progress overall because teaching is not sufficiently challenging.
- The quality of marking, and in particular written feedback, is too varied and students are not always given sufficient guidance on what they must do to improve their learning.
- The governing body has not done enough to hold school leaders to account for the attainment and progress of groups of students who are underperforming.
- Middle leaders have not always used assessment data well enough with their teams to plan work that is adequately challenging.
- Some students do not attend school regularly.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has acted quickly to challenge underperformance. She has already secured the commitment of the school community to a clear plan of action to raise standards.
- School leaders, including governors, have an accurate and clear view of the school's weaknesses. They have introduced robust strategies which are beginning to improve teaching and achievement. As a result, the school's performance is beginning to improve.
- Students are proud to attend Trentham High School. They and their parents say they feel safe in school.
- Students participate in a wide range of curriculum enrichment activities which has led to their social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development being strong.
- Students have a good knowledge of information technology and use computers to extend their creativity.
- The one-to-one interventions for students with special educational needs provide effective individual support. This is regularly evaluated to ensure that it is well focussed on accelerating progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 part lessons including one lesson that was jointly observed by the lead inspector and headteacher. Inspectors attended tutor periods and observed one assembly.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, members of the governing body, a representative from Stoke-on-Trent Local Authority, and senior and middle leaders.
- During the inspection, inspectors heard students read, scrutinised students' work in lessons, and monitored the behaviour of students during and between lessons.
- The inspection team selected a sample of exercise books from students of different abilities and across a range of subjects. These were scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 52 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and considered an email response by a parent to the inspection. They also considered the responses made by 16 staff to the optional staff survey provided by Ofsted.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation and policies including the school's raising achievement plan, governors' development plan, governing body minutes, self evaluation documents, the school's data and tracking of students' achievement, logs of behaviour and attendance.
- Documents relating to the safeguarding of students at Trentham High School were also reviewed.

Inspection team

Nigel Pressnell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
James Kidd	Additional Inspector
Judith Tolley	Additional Inspector
Mark Shenton	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with 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 it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Trentham High School is a cooperative trust science college.
- It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- An average proportion of students is known to be eligible support through the pupil premium. This is additional funding provided to support those pupils who are in receipt of free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and the children of service personnel.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is lower than average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of students speaking English as an additional language is similar to that found nationally.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2013 and the governing body is currently led by an acting Chair of Governors.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision to assist them with their behaviour or medical needs. The main providers are REACH and MERIT.
- New classroom accommodation has recently been built on the school site. During the inspection a few lessons were taught in temporarily allocated rooms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better across all subjects, including in English, mathematics, science, and modern foreign languages, in order to raise achievement, especially for girls, middle ability students and those known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, by:
 - improving the use of assessment in the planning and teaching of lessons in order to provide the right level of challenge for all students
 - ensuring marking and in particular written feedback to students always enable them to know precisely what they must do to improve their work
 - improving students' participation in lessons by giving more opportunities for students to work and learn independently rather than being passive in lessons.
- Improve the attendance of those students who do not come to school as regularly as they should by making better use of incentives and challenging parents whose children are persistently absent from school.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring:-
 - governors make full use of the detailed information available to them about the work of the school to hold school leaders accountable with the utmost rigour for the school's performance
 - middle leaders consistently drive improvements in their subjects and other areas of responsibility so that standards, particularly of teaching and attainment, improve rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students' achievement is inadequate because they do not make the progress over time that they should, given their higher-than-average starting points when joining the school.
- In 2012, students overall did not make sufficient progress in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. In particular, girls and middle ability students made insufficient progress compared with national averages. Progress in English has shown too much variation over the last three years. It was below national levels in 2010, improved in 2011 but declined in 2012. Progress in mathematics declined between 2010 and 2012, each year being below the level found nationally. However, inspectors found that the progress students make in lessons is improving as a result of better teaching in key subjects.
- Overall attainment was broadly in line with the national average for 2012, having slightly improved over the last three years. In 2012 61% of students achieved five GCSE passes at grades A*-C including English and mathematics.
- The school is a specialist science college. However weak teaching in science, most notably in 2012, resulted in students making inadequate progress with too few higher grades being achieved in biology, chemistry, physics or other sciences in comparison to national pass rates.
- Boys' attainment has risen over three years and in 2012 boys' GCSE results were significantly higher than those attained nationally by boys in English and mathematics. However, there was a marked difference between boys' and girls' attainment. This was most noticeable in mathematics, where girls' attainment was much lower than the national average for girls.
- The progress of students for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding is inadequate overall. In 2012, students known to be eligible for free school meals formed just under one third of Year 11. The proportion of these students making expected progress was much lower than found nationally for this group. The gap in performance between these and other students increased in English and mathematics between 2011 and 2012 and they were over a whole GCSE grade below other students on completing Year 11. However, the gap between the performance of these students and others in the school is currently narrowing, especially in mathematics, because of improvements made in the tracking and support for these students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make better progress than similar students nationally in English. However, they make much less progress than the national figure in mathematics. Pupils speaking English as an additional language make broadly average progress.
- The headteacher has undertaken a review of the school's curriculum and with governors' approval has amended the school's policy on early entry to GCSE examinations. The impact of this has been to allow greater opportunity for all students to reach the higher grades and achieve their best.
- Under the direction of the headteacher, greater emphasis is already being given to strategies to improve literacy and numeracy. Inspectors observed targeted intervention provided for students with special educational needs. Learning support assistants provided effective support for individuals which they regularly reviewed to ensure it accelerated progress in the basic skills for these students.
- The number of students who at the conclusion of their education do not enter employment, education or training was fractionally higher than the local authority's average in two of the last three years. However, the proportion of the same students one year later generally compares much more favourably than elsewhere in Stoke-on-Trent.
- The school has effective systems to monitor the welfare and progress of the small numbers of students who attend alternative provision. They are safe and they achieve well, demonstrating the school's positive commitment to equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because teaching has not allowed students to make the progress they should over time across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- In lessons where teaching required improvement, students were insufficiently challenged and engaged and they did not participate fully in learning. Some teachers allowed students to select tasks rather than directing them to work that stretched them further.
- In too many lessons, students were allowed to sit passively rather than being strong contributors to their own learning. For example, inspectors observed some ineffective use of questioning that discouraged students from developing their own ideas as the teachers too quickly provided the answers. In some instances exercise books are scruffy and dog-eared, suggesting that students are not being directed strongly enough to produce their best on all occasions.
- The marking of exercise books does not yet fully meet the standards expected by the headteacher or documented in marking policies. Some students' books are infrequently checked by their teachers and written comments do not inform students of the next steps they should take to improve their work. Instances of good marking and self-review were observed as a strong feature in better lessons. To cite one example, in a Year 10 art class, students routinely reviewed their progress before agreeing the next steps with their teacher.
- The quality of teaching is beginning to improve as a result of actions taken by school leaders. During the course of the inspection, some examples of good teaching were seen although none was outstanding. In the best lessons teachers made good use of the new systems for tracking students' attainment to plan lessons that were challenging and exciting. These lessons featured work that made use of activities that were well matched to students' individual needs and that they completed with a fast pace.
- Learning support assistants made a strong contribution to the learning and progress of the individual students or small groups to whom they were attached. Their deployment was well considered and the best lesson plans documented the interaction between teachers and support staff so that clear objectives were identified for the progress of students receiving additional support, in particular with their numeracy and literacy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Although students are generally polite and friendly, in some classes too many students were overly passive in their approach to lessons. Also, the persistent absence of some students has had a negative impact on their achievement and therefore potentially others in their class as the teacher repeats work that has been missed.
- Overall attendance is improving and is in line with national averages. However, persistent absence (those students missing more than 15% of school time) is too high for students known to be eligible for free school meals, including some with special educational needs. During the inspection students were seen to attend lessons punctually.
- The school made no permanent exclusions in 2012. Fixed-term exclusions are falling and below the national average.
- In a few lessons low-level misbehaviour was seen but this was quickly addressed by teachers who correctly used the school's new sanction system. Students tell inspectors they believe that behaviour has improved since the headteacher was appointed and that they think that the new sanction system is fair.
- Ninety three per cent of parents responding to Parent View told inspectors that their children feel safe at Trentham High School and 85% feel that the school makes sure its students are well behaved. Students told inspectors that they feel bullying is rare at the school and generally dealt with quickly by teachers. The school maintains comprehensive incident logs which would be further improved by separating the recording of racist or homophobic incidents, should they occur, to make analysis easier.
- Students benefit from the opportunity to use computers and hand-held tablet computers which

are widely available in school. They use these responsibly and are familiar with e-Safety. This means that they have the skills and knowledge to remain safe online.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because achievement and teaching, although starting to improve, are not currently at least good. In the recent past there has been insufficient scrutiny of standards by governors. As a result, the school's leaders have until recently not been held rigorously to account for the school's performance.
- The school's current leaders and managers demonstrate, through their accurate self-evaluation, that they understand the reasons for the school's performance over time. They are very clear about the actions they must take in order to address the priorities which they have identified for themselves specifically in relation to improving teaching and raising achievement.
- The headteacher, leading by example, has quickly motivated staff to address the weaknesses highlighted since her appointment. Her vision to drive up standards at Trentham High School is widely shared and teachers comment on the work now being undertaken at her direction. To give one example, the school has improved the monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice between teachers and learning support assistants. The school is making use of the local Teaching School Alliance to provide additional support where weaknesses have been identified in subject areas. These actions have led to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Those staff responsible for leading subject and pastoral teams are developing their responsibility soundly and now beginning to make better use of the improved systems, introduced by the new headteacher, to monitor and track the performance of individual students. New staffing structures are designed to further enhance this work and accelerate the impact already evident, for example, in the setting of challenging targets for students.
- The recent review of the school's curriculum identified weaknesses that are now being addressed. However, these will take time to become fully effective as some students have already embarked on courses of study which the school will conclude with them so they are not disadvantaged. In reviewing their policy on early entry for GCSE examinations, current leaders intend to maximise the opportunity for all students to make rapid progress and fulfil their potential by achieving higher grades.
- The school effectively promotes the students' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development through its social studies and wide range of extracurricular clubs, visits and activities. For example, inspectors noted links with a South African school, Year 9 activities in support of terminally ill children and opportunities for senior students to practise their leadership skills, speaking in assembly ahead of the selection of senior prefects.
- According to Parent View, over two thirds of parents believe the school is well led, although one quarter say they do not know. It is the view of inspectors that current leaders have the capacity to move the school forward. This is because the new headteacher and school leaders have already begun to improve teaching, the tracking and monitoring of students' progress, use of rewards and sanctions and have gained the full commitment of staff to raising standards.
- The school meets required statutory requirements for the safeguarding of children in their care.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - In the past the governing body has not been effective in providing sufficient challenge in holding leaders, at all levels, to account for the school's performance. However, governors now recognise that achievement and teaching have not been good enough over time. Consequently they have become more rigorous in their practice of using school data to interrogate all aspects of the school's performance and particularly the impact of professional development on teaching.
 - The headteacher and acting Chair of the Governing Body have led the governors in identifying coherent strategies to improve the school. The actions which have already been implemented are demonstrating impact, for example, in the allocation of pupil premium funding to improve outcomes in mathematics for students in more vulnerable circumstances.

- The governing body correctly oversees performance management of staff and ensures that there is a close fit between those progressing through pay scales and their performance in the classroom.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124388
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	412773

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	750
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Pate
Headteacher	Dr Rowena Blencowe
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2010
Telephone number	01782 234534
Fax number	01782 234537
Email address	trentham@sgfl.org.uk

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