

# Trentham High School

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

**Inspection dates** 10–11 September 2014

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Some leaders do not check the ongoing standards of learners or the performance of staff. This leads to some students not making rapid enough progress.
- New governance and procedures have yet to bring about the best possible outcomes for learners.
- Not enough has been done by middle leaders to make sure that all staff adhere to agreed policies, such as marking, to ensure consistency in approaches throughout the school.
- A small number of parents feel that they are not informed well enough about their children's progress.
- The quality of teaching is not yet good enough to raise achievement to good. Students are not always inspired to do well by some teachers and, as a result, they do not give their studies the best attention.
- The most-able students do not always reach the highest standards of attainment of which they are capable. The progress students have made by the time they leave the school, although rising sharply is not yet at the level it should be, particularly in English and mathematics.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has ambitions to create strong leadership teams and develop governors.
- Students overwhelmingly support their teachers, their leaders and each other. They are proud of their school, are smart, polite and happy.
- Students feel very safe and should bullying occur, they know it will be dealt with swiftly.
- Senior leaders are accurate in their judgements about the performance of staff and this is helping to support improvements in their work.
- Students are rarely excluded either permanently or for a fixed term. The school's internal behaviour support systems are effective.
- Attendance has risen sharply and persistent absence has reduced. The school's systems for checking on students who are absent are now more robust and leading to improvements.
- Governors have high expectations of themselves and are keen to develop their skills of challenging the performance of leaders further to effect better outcomes for students.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons across the school including four that were observed jointly with senior leaders. Two assemblies were also observed.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders, two groups of students, a group of parents and a representative of the local authority.
- Additional informal discussions were held with students in lessons and break times, and with parents before school.
- Scrutiny of students' work was carried out during lesson observations and as a separate exercise to identify the current progress of students and trends over time.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included documents relating to the performance of staff, the progress of students over time, safeguarding and child-protection procedures, minutes of the meetings of the governing body and those relating to the school leaders' own view of more recent achievement and improvement.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons, at break time and in the school canteen and looked at the school's inclusion policies and procedures.
- The inspectors took account of 95 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey, 38 responses to the staff questionnaire and an email sent in by a parent.

## Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Denis Oliver	Additional Inspector
Henry Moreton	Additional Inspector

## Full report

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.

### Information about this school

- Trentham High School is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for extra support from the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The school makes limited use of Stoke on Trent's collective pupil referral unit for alternative provision.
- The school is supported by a school improvement adviser working in collaboration with the local authority.
- The headteacher was appointed at Easter in 2013, shortly before the last inspection.
- The school has been partly refurbished through the Building Schools for the Future programme after local residents successfully campaigned against its planned closure.
- The 'Artsmark' and 'Dyslexia Friendly Status' have recently been awarded to the school.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so that it is good or better by:
  - challenging all teachers to set consistently high aspirations and expectations for all students
  - securing a consistent approach to marking in all subjects so that students reinforce their knowledge and understanding, and learn from their mistakes
  - ensuring teachers challenge all students equally so that the rates of progress for all learning abilities are equally strong, particularly the most able.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
  - ensuring governors consolidate recent gains in their skills and use their new knowledge to effect greater challenge to school leaders for the performance of students
  - providing effective and consistent support to newly qualified staff and staff new to the school
  - developing the skills of leaders to use data accurately to inform them of the progress students make and to use it to challenge teachers to increase the rates of learning further, particularly of the most able.
  - improving e-communications so that parents are kept regularly informed about the school and the progress of their children, particularly via the school's website and the learning platform.
- Further accelerate the recent gains in the achievement of students, particularly in Key Stage 3 and for the disadvantaged, by:
  - ensuring the rates of progress at least match the levels expected in each year group, and by the minimum expectations by the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics
  - providing more effective support to disadvantaged students so that their progress accelerates
  - ensuring teachers set high and challenging targets for students and so support learners' keenness to do well at school.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- The recent changes in the leadership structure have not led to faster progress by students. Consequently, students do not achieve the very best that they can. Middle leaders are inconsistent in their approach to challenging the performance of their teams and the progress their learners make. Some school policies, such as marking, are not followed by all, although it is clear that where such policies are applied successfully, such as in mathematics, the rates of progress achieved by students are significantly stronger.
- A small but vocal number of parents remain unconvinced that the school is heading in the right direction. This is in contrast to the views of the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online (Parent View) survey where 82% would both recommend the school to others and believe that it is well led and managed. A small group of parents who met inspectors insisted that the school is much improved on a year ago. The school website, one means of communication to parents, does not clearly demonstrate the school's improvement or the standards learners now reach.
- The new headteacher promptly identified areas for development and restructured the leadership team so that it is better placed to affect quick and accurate challenge to performance. The skills of the senior leadership team in measuring the quality of teaching and the progress of learners are high and effective. However, some middle leaders have not yet fully developed their skills in these areas.
- The school's own evaluation of its progress and future needs via the 'Raising Achievement Plan' is accurate and matches the views of the inspection team. It clearly identifies how the school can improve further. Although it does clearly identify outcomes, it does not include clear and regular milestones to help measure improvement and to which leaders can be held accountable.
- Gaps between the achievement of different groups of learners have been identified accurately and swift action is being taken to boost progress for some students. However, the headteacher states that there is still work to be done to ensure that students of all abilities are able to reach their highest standards. Leaders have been extremely successful at reversing falling attendance rates so that attendance is now near the national average.
- Leadership of newly qualified teachers and those new to the school is good. There is strong nurture and support for them to increase their skills so that this results in higher rates of progress.
- Governors and senior leaders have changed how the pupil premium funding is allocated and its impact evaluated.. There are clear examples of how this funding has improved opportunities for learning for some disadvantaged students, such as access to personal learning technologies.
- All leaders and staff now share a common passion and goal for all students to do well. The school is now in a much stronger position to secure further improvements.
- The curriculum offered by the school is appropriate and leading to students' greater enjoyment of their learning. However, the full effects of the changes have yet to filter through to improved outcomes for learners . Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the learning are supported well across the whole curriculum, including British values such as democracy and the rule of law.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have historically not had access to useful information to help them hold the school to account or had the skills to do so. However, due to the diligent support of the headteacher and the support of the local authority, they are now in a secure position to do so. They are passionate about the school and united in their approach to see further improvements.
  - Governors have the skills and information to confidently assess whether teachers should progress through the pay scales and, in addition, teachers are acutely aware of what they need to do in order to progress successfully.
  - The governing body ensures safeguarding requirements are met.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are well looked after, know how to be safe in school and online, and they are aware of how to seek help if they need to. They say bullying is rare, and if it does occur and is reported, they know teachers will deal with it.
- Attendance has risen markedly over the last year for all groups of students, including the disadvantaged, so that is now near to the national average. However, there remains a very small gap between the attendance of the disadvantaged students and that of their peers.
- Exclusions are rare and there has been only one permanent exclusion in the last three years. This is due

to the good pastoral support and the use of the school's own internal inclusion systems.

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are extremely polite and pleasant to staff, visitors and their peers and speak clearly to each other. One member of the inspection team noted that, 'notable by its absence was swearing by students'.
- Students are swift and punctual to lessons, keen to do well and very few arrive late to school. They are happy as they walk around the school and speak to staff and their friends. Ninety-four per cent of parents responding online stated that their child was happy at the school.
- Students are well equipped to understand moral values. For example, due to a full programme of assemblies, they develop their understanding of right and wrong as well as their own personal aspirations. However, in some lessons, their keenness to excel is thwarted because some teachers do not have high enough expectations. There were instances where, in a few lessons, learners failed to engage fully or get excited by their tasks and this led to some pupils not fully concentrating on their work.
- Teachers and students show mutual respect. They are extremely proud of their school and were keen to tell inspectors how much has changed. One student stated to an inspector that, 'Teaching is much better now; you can tell the teachers are being trained with newer skills.'
- The pastoral structures of the school effectively support the well-being of students, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British Values. For example, students were keen to explain how they could see 'democracy in action' via the election of the head boy.
- Staff are unanimous in their view that behaviour is good at the school. This is supported both by students and 85% of parents who responded to the online survey.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching does not result in good outcomes for learners or positive gains for all groups of students because it does not always match the needs of all groups of students or always inspire them to engage or do well. However, recent developments in supporting the quality of teaching and making staff more aware of how to accurately assess performance has meant a sharp rise in the standards reached at GCSE across all subject areas.
- Teaching has improved and the leaders are targeting staff training accurately so that teachers receive better support to plan lessons which inspire and engage the students to do well. Teaching staff are now held to account for the progress of students.
- Many teachers successfully use the school's learning platform, a means of supporting learning through technology in school and at home, to increase rates of progress in learners across many subject areas. However, this success is limited as not all teachers are skilled in its use.
- Marking and assessment, although improving, remain inconsistent across the school. Students are now more aware of how they can improve their work.
- Although all groups of learners are now making better progress, some most-able students are still not challenged well enough to ensure that they reach the highest standards. Not enough of them are reaching the highest grades they are capable of in examinations.
- The questioning of students by their teachers is now stronger and they use this skill to good effect, challenging learners to think more deeply and critically. Many are now able to use the students' own responses and inquisitiveness to change tack in a lesson to respond to what the students need to know or learn.
- The progress students make because of better quality teaching is stronger in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 as teachers work hard to reverse the historic decline in standards. However, more needs to be done to ensure better quality teaching across all year groups, particularly in Key Stage 3, so that the foundations of successful learning are strong and students are able to make more rapid progress. Some students starting GCSE courses in Year 10 are often taught skills and knowledge that they had previously learnt in Year 9, which slows their overall rate of progress.
- The school has invested heavily in personal learning technologies, supported financially by parents, to support teaching and learning. The use of this technology is integrated well into everyday lessons and students use the technology both naturally and safely. There were many examples seen of its successful use. For example, in one Year 8 German lesson, students of all abilities were challenged to use the technology to confirm words in the foreign language using foreign websites and this supported their language development well.

**The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- In 2013 the standards reached by students at the school in GCSE examinations fell dramatically. Although the school still met the government's minimum standards results fell well short of what should have been achieved given the students' attainment on entry to the school.
- In the last year, much has been done by leaders and teachers to reverse that decline. The 2014 GCSE examinations demonstrated a sharp rise in standards: 54% of students attained 5 GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics; a rise of 13% in one year.
- Other subjects also saw their standards rise across all ability ranges. This was due largely to the immediate tackling of weaker teaching by the new headteacher and the restructured leadership team and governors. Inspection evidence suggests that this rise is not a one-off, that the rate of progress is set to rise further and the progress now made across all year groups is stronger due to a re-energised teaching workforce led by ambitious leaders. However, more needs to be done to improve rates of progress in Key Stage 3 so that students are better-placed to excel in Key Stage 4.
- The very few students who attend off-site provision do as well as their peers within the school and the curriculum they receive is appropriate to their individual needs.
- Leaders track and monitor students' progress regularly. However, some middle leaders data analysis skills are underdeveloped.
- In 2013 GCSE English, the results of disadvantaged students were about two-thirds of a grade lower than their peers in school and more than a grade lower than students nationally. Provisional GCSE English results for disadvantaged students in 2014 improved by almost one and half grades, considerably reducing the gap between these students' results and those of other students. In 2013 GCSE mathematics, the results for disadvantaged students were lower than their peers in the school by just over a grade and more than a grade lower than students nationally. In 2014, mathematics results for disadvantaged students improved by about a third of a grade so reducing the gap between these students' results and those of others.
- The most-able students are now making much better progress overall. For example, some are now attaining the highest grades possible in core science. However, the progress made by the most able in the GCSE mathematics examination in 2014 was not as high as other ability groups.
- The few students who are disabled or who have an identified special educational need make the same and sometimes better progress than their peers so that any gaps in standards are narrowing.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124388
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-On-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	447715

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	710
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Pate
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Rowena Blencowe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 June 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 883200
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